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[Introductory video with words and music background:]

Jesus said:

IF SOMEONE STRIKES YOU ON THE CHEEK,
TURN THE OTHER ALSO

IF YOUR EYE CAUSES YOU TO SIN, GOUGE IT OUT

IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE,
YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOU

NARROW IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE:
ONLY A FEW FIND IT

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM, AND
ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU.

[Then displaying one at a time:]

RIGHTEOUSNESS

PURITY

FORGIVENESS

GENEROSITY

HUMILITY

PEACE

[Video concludes by displaying the series title:]

Really!?*

*The shocking statements of **Jesus**

[Pastor Scott begins:]

Good morning. Good to see you guys. How's my loud and rowdy 9:30 crowd doing? [Boisterous congregational response] All right, we are ready to roll.

July 16, 1999: John F. Kennedy, Jr. along with his wife and sister-in-law hopped in a small aircraft that he himself was piloting. They departed from Essex County, New Jersey, on their way to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Many of you know they never made it alive. Piloting that small aircraft, JFK Jr. (they) plunged into the Atlantic Ocean.

After researching the crash, the National Transportation Safety Board concluded that the primary cause for JFK Jr.'s plane to go down was what they call spatial disorientation, otherwise known as vertigo. Vertigo, they say—and I am not a pilot nor a doctor—(but vertigo) is when, for a pilot, they lose perspective of the horizon.

- They're either flying through the dark and the stars and the lights of the cities begin to look one and the same and it meshes together.
- Or they're flying through gray, foggy rain and they cannot see the horizon.

Medically, they say: in our inner ear canal there's liquid in their (there's a fluid). It's (kind of) like our self-leveler. When that tips, that's how we know that we're [out of] kilter. When that happens—when we're flying an aircraft—we can make a sudden, just a slight deviation (like three degrees going to the left) and what initially feels like we're off, we begin to correct ourselves internally and we think that we're right. Then once we realize it—

- We're going so far (and)
- We try to correct it (and then)
- We get all off
- We try to overcorrect

It's just a big ol' mess. What happens is (they say): it can cause a spiraling downward of the aircraft because you just don't know which way is up and which way is down. They call that vertigo. They say that's what happened to JFK Jr. when he was flying that airplane.

Today we're going to continue our series, *Really!? The shocking statements of Jesus*. If you have your Bible, you can open it up to *Matthew, chapter 5*, and we're going to look beginning in *verse 43*. Here's what He says—Jesus speaking (He says):

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:43-45 (NIV)

The original intent in my message today was to be another Christian do-good talk on loving your enemy, but I just couldn't do it. (Because) as I look at *verse 43* and a couple verses after (okay) it's black-and-white; Jesus is saying: Love your enemy. (Okay) don't just love your neighbor, but love your enemy. Do good to those who persecute you; pray for them. (Okay) that's black-and-white. (Okay) I get it, Jesus.

(But let me just) let me take a higher altitude. Let me fly over the context of what He's saying here. (Because) this is in what's historically know as the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew 5, 6 and 7*. And as I began to look over the whole perspective of *Matthew, chapter 5*, I began to get—honestly—a little disoriented. What was black-and-white became unclear. The fog began to develop. So I said: Let me back up and go even a little higher and go back into *Matthew, chapter 4*, toward the end. Let me do a flyover for you here real quick. Here's what happens:

Matthew, chapter 4, I think it's around *verse 23* through the end of that chapter [and] into [*chapter*] *5*, it says that Jesus is going all around this area called Galilee.

- People are coming from all around.
- He's teaching about the Kingdom of God.
- He's teaching about the Kingdom of heaven.

People [who] are coming around Him are sick—

- Some of them are literally paralyzed.
- Some (the Scripture says) are demon possessed.
- Others are just (they're just) at their wit's end.

—and Jesus is praying for them and He's healing every single one of them. Because of that, the

crowd gets bigger and bigger and bigger. The Bible says they came from Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem and the Decapolis, which is the surrounding cities, to hear this Jesus, Who is performing these miraculous acts.

So as the crowd builds bigger and bigger, Jesus—in *Matthew, chapter 5*—it says: He went up on a hill and He sat down, which (in that day) was what a rabbi would do when [he] began to teach. So, with all the crowd around, when the rabbi—Jesus—went up on the hill and sat down, they knew it was time to be quiet because He was going to teach. He began what's called the Sermon on the Mount. Some of you may be familiar with it. The first thing He says is—what?

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matthew 5:3-6 (NIV)

Blessed are those who have a pure heart, for those are the ones who will see God. [*Matthew 5:8* (paraphrased)] And He goes on (He says): Blessed are you when they persecute you falsely for My sake, because it's happened all the time in the past; it's going to happen in the future. [*Matthew 5:11-12* (paraphrased)] "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world." [*Matthew 5:13, 14 (NIV)*]

Okay, it's going good, right? It's like: All right! [Clapping his hands:] Man, this is amazing teaching from this guy named Jesus. He's healing and now He's teaching this amazing stuff that's brand-new to us. Wow! This is amazing.

And then He throws in this verse (He says): And if your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. [*Matthew 5:20* (paraphrased)]

Whoa! Okay—What? What?—okay, okay, shake that one off.

And He goes on and He begins to elaborate: You've heard in the old covenant (in the *Old Testament*) not to murder. But I tell you that if you are so much as angry toward your brother, you are subject to judgment. And if you call your brother a fool, you're subject to hell. [*Matthew 5:26-27* (paraphrased)]

Whew! Okay, shocking statement. And then He goes on and He says:

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'

Matthew 5:27 (NIV)

But I tell you this: If you lust after a woman in your heart, you've already committed adultery with her—ugh!—or the guy on the *Harlequin*® romance cover. [*Matthew 5:28* (paraphrased)]

And you've heard that it's been said: If it's not going well, just get a divorce. Well, I'm telling you this: (That) if you do get a divorce, you're causing your spouse to commit adultery. And if you marry someone who's divorced, you're committing adultery. [*Matthew 5:31-32* (paraphrased)]

Whoa! All right, don't leave yet—shocking statement!

And then He moves on and He says (you know): You guys make vows. You vow—you say: I'm going to promise to God I'm going to do this. And—

- In the name of God (or)
- In the name of heaven and earth

—I'm going to do this. And Jesus says: Your word doesn't really mean anything; just let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no." [*Matthew 5:33-37* (paraphrased)]

And then He says: (And) you've also heard, "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" but I tell you this: If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn the other one also and let him deck you there. If someone sues you and wants to take your shirt, give it to him; and by the way, give him your jacket as well. If a Roman soldier, whom I know you despise because they treat you inappropriately; if they command you to carry their gear for a mile, I want you to take it for two. And, by the way, you've heard that it's been said: Love your neighbor and hate your enemies. But it's a new day! Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. [*Matthew 5:38-44* (paraphrased)]

Do you see where I'm getting a little disoriented here? It's not as [black-and-white]. I'm like: What is Jesus trying to say here? And then He nails us right between the eyes with the last verse in *chapter 5*. Here it is. It is *verse 48*. Here's the kicker for me. I was intending to say: Love your enemies; do good—right?—that's the Christian way to go. But then He says this (*verse 48*):

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
Matthew 5:48 (NIV)

Okay, stop right here! I just couldn't—with integrity—just go black-and-white and say... Well, let me just get that out of the way; let me get that message out of the way. Here it is—you ready? Okay, nod if you're ready. All right: Go love your enemies. All right—good—we got that out of the way, all right.

Well, what is Jesus saying here? This doesn't make sense, because He said—we go back into *verse 20*—He says: Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees.

Now, if you're not familiar with who the Pharisees are, here's who they were; they were basically:

- The pastors
- The priests
- The spiritual leaders of the day

And just like most religious people, they added on a whole list of things-to-do to be right with God that God never said in the first place. (You know) it's what I'm culturally used to; what I prefer:

- You need to do this, this, this and this.
- You need to look like me
- ...smell like me
- ...eat the same food
- You need to be an American Christian, by God!

Okay? And they add their religious list up—now, we all have a tendency to do that. But not only that, but they literally did love God with all their heart, their soul, their mind and strength; and tried to fulfill all of the 1613 commands of the *Old Testament* Scripture.

And so Jesus (kind of) sets the bar: Hey, unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, you're not going into the kingdom of heaven. (Okay.) And then He wraps it up at the end—He bookends it with: Now be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

And I'm thinking: Okay, what is the message He's trying to get across here? It doesn't make sense.

And here's what I would say is the common application for *Matthew, chapter 5*. And if you're ready to take notes, you can write this down. (Because) what happens is: if we take this application of *Matthew, chapter 5*, I believe it sends us into what I would call *spiritual vertigo*. We begin to go off course and we don't even know it. And before we can tell—

- We're flipping upside down (and)
- We don't know which way is up
- ...which way is down
- We can't even see the horizon

Here's the common application to *Matthew, chapter 5*, and it's this:

NOW THAT I'M A CHRISTIAN, HERE'S WHAT I DO

Now that I'm a Christian, here's what I do:

- I live by a higher standard
- I live by a higher moral law

As if Jesus was speaking to Christians then anyway; because there weren't any Christians at that time—right?—pre-resurrection.

But, okay, now that I'm a Christian, not only do I—okay—I can't murder. Okay, I'm going to grit my teeth. I'm going to do this thing. I'm going to live this Christian life and I'm not even going to be angry at somebody in a way that I want to get back at them and maybe even hurt them. [Sigh!] Anybody guilt-less on that one?

Okay, now that I'm a Christian, (okay)—

- I have to (okay) I'm going to go to church all the time.
- I'm going to read my Bible every day.

- I'm going to pray without ceasing.
- I'm going to get into a *Life Group* every week.
- I'm going to go on a mission trip.
- I'm going to volunteer.
- I'm going to get busy.
- I am going to—as a man, I'm going to go to a men's conference and hear 50 things I need to do to be a godly husband.
- [As a woman] I'm going to go to a ladies' conference and hear how to be a *Proverbs 31* woman and tack up all the list of things to do, to do, to do as a Christian.

And if that's not enough, I'm going to live a higher moral law:

- I'm not even going to get angry with my brother.
- I'm not going to lust after a woman (or lust after a man).
- I'm going to turn the other cheek.
- I'm going to love my enemies.

And, by the way, let's just do this: I'm going to be perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect.

Whew! I don't know if I'm up or down here. Vertigo: What does this mean? If we approach our Christian life with the starting point of *Now that I'm a Christian, this is what I do*; I suggest: we're getting into vertigo.

A couple symptoms—if you have spiritual vertigo—there are probably a number of them. I'll (just kind of) hit two of them real quick. Spiritual symptom number one, if you have spiritual vertigo (number one is this): we are critical and judgmental of others.

SPIRITUAL VERTIGO SYMPTOM #1: YOU'RE CRITICAL AND JUDGMENTAL OF OTHERS

Why would we be critical and judgmental of others? Well, here's what happens. If I look at *Matthew, chapter 5*, and do this, do this, do this, do this, do this [pantomimes a growing list with his hands] do all this stuff that gets added on, I begin to keep a list. I begin to track: Well, how well am I doing? Am I doing really good? [Pantomimes a scale with his arms outstretched to each side] Or am I really living in sin? Where's the scale going to go? And if I'm having a really good month or a good season—man!—my list: I'm performing, I'm performing, I'm doing all this good Christian stuff—(and) I tend to get critical and judgmental of others. Why?—because I see that their good is down here [indicating the lower side of the scale] while mine is up here [indicating the upper side of the scale].

We so want to perform, don't we? And so we look at someone else [gasp in shock:]

- You chew *Red Man*?!
- You smoke menthols?! If you're going to do it, you might as well do *Camel* non-filter. I mean come on! Go—if you're going down—go down in flames!
- (I mean) You drink cheap beer?!
- Look at you, you're a sinner. You're filthy. Oh my! Keep (you) away from me, because I'm a Christian and don't taint me; because greater is he who's in you than who's in me.

(You know) we begin to compare. We get critical and judgmental of others. It's a natural response to spiritual vertigo.

Let's let Jesus' words scare the bejabbers out of us when He says in *Matthew, chapter 7*—a little later—*verse 1* (What's He say?) Judge not lest you be judged. [*Matthew 7:1* (paraphrased)] Hey! Then He elaborates even more after that; but, "Who are you to judge?" is what He's saying; because we tend to do that though. We're keeping our list: *Now that I'm a Christian, here's what I do*.

Spiritual symptom number two of spiritual vertigo, after this if *I'm Critical and Judgmental of Others*, I am—are you ready for this one?—I am exhausted and feeling defeated.

SPIRITUAL VERTIGO SYMPTOM #2: YOU'RE FEELING EXHAUSTED AND DEFEATED

I'm telling you, I don't know how many times I myself in trying to live this life, doing the hard work to live the life of a follower of Christ and trying to do all the right stuff—and don't let me bother you with the to-dos, I'll get there. There are things that we do. But as the starting point, if as a Christian we look at *here's what I do*, we get in spiritual vertigo. And I can't tell you how many times I have felt exhausted and defeated trying to keep up.

(I mean) you guys/ladies, you may know Sister Sally. (All right, come on!) Sister Sally: her kids are spit-polished. She is perfect in every way. She holds her husband's hand through the whole mall. She has her Beth Moore T-shirt on and she's doing it right. She's living the life. And she just looks perfect. (I mean) her minivan doesn't have one French-fry between the seats at all.

And, of course, we know Brother Bob. (I mean) he's a *Promise Keeper*. And (you know) he's leading the *Men's Ministry*. And—man!—he knows the Word of God. (I mean) you say: Good morning, Bob; how are you? [Dramatizing a burly response:] I'm blessed. I'm above and not beneath. I'm more than a conqueror in Christ, the One who died for me and redeemed me by the blood of Jesus.

Whoa! Stand down, Bob. I mean, it's true (it's true). It's good, but easy there, easy; you're scaring me. (I mean) Sister Sally's perfect. And Brother Bob (I mean) he's got it all together. And the problem with those guys is that—even though that's a great goal to have—they're probably lying...a little bit; because we're human (we're human). We tend to perform and just perform. And you add on all this stuff of what it means to be a Christian and (I mean) read all the books about getting rid of my junk and everything. And it's good, but if we start with that as the focal point—*now that I'm a Christian, here's what I do*—we can get into spiritual vertigo.

How do we get out of spiritual vertigo?

Well, here's what they will say in aviation [about] how you get out of vertigo as a pilot: trust your instruments. Regardless of how you feel—

- When what you think is gravity on your seat, [that] may be thrust
- When you think that those are the lights of the city, those may be the stars

When you're in vertigo and you don't know, you look at your instruments. And you trust your instruments regardless of how you feel. And you navigate with those instruments. That's the way to get out of vertigo; because if you don't, you may spiral down and go right into the ground.

Here's how we get out of spiritual vertigo: we trust in what God's Word says regardless of how we feel. We trust it.

God can say something in His Word, but we're not feeling that. We're [thinking:] Yeah, but I still have to perform. (And) we do and we go and we get off-course and we flip upside down. But trust God's Word no matter how we feel. So, here we go: we get out of spiritual vertigo by trusting God's Word no matter how we feel.

And here's the thing—we get there (in vertigo) by saying: *Now that I'm a Christian, here's what I do*. Here's another way that we get out; we say this thought: This is the beginning of living this life. Now that I'm a Christian, here's who I am.

NOW THAT I'M A CHRISTIAN, HERE'S WHO I AM

Are you ready to go deep? Nod if you're ready to go deep. Nod if the person next to you is dozing off. Ugh! I saw some nods—not good.

Now that I'm a Christian, Here's who I am—and I have just two things that really are the foundation of it all to keep us out of spiritual vertigo [and] going toward that destination of being transformed by God in our life. The first one is this: *Now that I'm a Christian, I am saved*.

NOW THAT I'M A CHRISTIAN, I AM SAVED

Everybody go: Woo! I told you I was going deep. Here's what Jesus says in *Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 and 9*. Now, listen to this compared to the “*this is what I do*” stuff. He says: “God saved you by his grace when you believed.” Why don't you let that sink in for just a moment?

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. {He didn't say: performed.} And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.

⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT, 2004 edition)

Now that I'm a Christian, I am saved—

- Not on my performance
- Not on all the things I think I need to do for God to accept me
- Not in my penance for my sins

I am saved by grace; it's a free gift from God. There's nothing I can do. (And) when we grasp that reality, being critical and judgmental tends to go away. Because, when I look at someone else, and I see that (maybe) they're living a lifestyle (maybe) it's full of sin, (and) I think: Praise God that when I was the same way, I was forgiven by grace; it's a gift of God. I had not to perform anything for it; I just had to believe in Christ and I was saved. (And) I see that person and I have a sense of compassion and I want to help them out because that's who I was.

Well, let's be honest. (Some of you guys—no, that's a northern thing, isn't it? Some of you all—let's go real deep—some of y'all. I don't know; I've just committed the unpardonable right there!) Some of you all have been going to church for years—or maybe weeks—and you're even doing a lot of great things to live this lifestyle of what we say it looks like to be a follower of Christ; to be a Christian. (I mean) you're working hard, but you've never made the decision to say:

- Jesus, I'm a sinner.
- I need a Savior and I cannot save myself. (And)
- I'm going to make a beeline to the cross of Christ and ask for You to change me—to forgive me.
- I want to be saved by a gift of God, not of anything I can do.

(And) you've never made that decision. (And) you're starting to do all this stuff to live this life. (And) here's what's happening. You're upside down and when you try to go to a new level, you're going to pull up on the stick and you're going to go right into the ground. You're going to crash and burn.

If you've never made that decision to be what the Scripture says is *saved*, you'll have that moment is just a few minutes.

What does it mean to be saved? Well, here's some of what it means. (I mean, my goodness, I couldn't go through all of it.)

- The Bible says that when we're saved, (that) God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more. [*Psalm 103:12* (paraphrased)]
- The Bible says that when we are saved, we're forgiven by God. And when we go into eternity we're going to spend eternity in heaven with Him in His presence. [*1 John 2:25* (paraphrased)]
- The Bible says that God will never leave us, He'll never forsake us. [*Hebrews 13:5* (paraphrased)]
- ...that He's for us, He's not against us. [*Romans 8:31* (paraphrased)]
- ...that He has a hope; He has a future for us. [*Jeremiah 29:11* (paraphrased)]
- ...that He wants to change our life and not leave us the way we are, but we are graciously forgiven and accepted by Him. [*2 Corinthians 5:17* (paraphrased)]

That's a little peek (that's a little peek) at what it means to be saved. When we begin to live life from that point: *this is who I am*—man!—okay, I'm starting to correct my course here; [pantomimes handling an airplane stick] getting back on track.

Number two when you've got spiritual vertigo is this—not only *I am saved*, but this:

NOW THAT I'M A CHRISTIAN, I AM SURRENDERED TO THE WORK OF GOD IN MY LIFE

Jesus says in *Matthew, chapter 10, verses 38 and 39*—

³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life...
Matthew 10:38 (NLT, 2004 edition)

If we hold onto those things that we want, that we think are the most important to us; and I've held onto a lot of them thinking this is what God wants me to have, only to realize later: Okay, it's just me; this is not God. And I'm sure there [are] still things like that in my life. He says:

³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.
Matthew 10:39 (NLT, 2004 edition)

Living the Christian life comes from a place of being continually surrendered to what He wants to do in us. And that gives hope for those of us who are far from perfect.

What's the last thing that you had to surrender to the work of God in your life? What's the last thing or the last time you came face to face with a big issue and you said, "Okay I have to painfully lay this down and allow God to do His work in me"?

A lot of us, we have that incredible moment of what I call *salvation*—

- We pray this prayer
- We repent of our sins
- We ask Christ to be Lord of our life

—which is the biggest thing. But then we don't live a life that's surrendered to Him. Jesus is my Savior, but He's not my Lord. I'm not submitted on a daily basis to His work in my life.

I like to look at living the Christian life (kind of) like an onion. All right, picture an onion. (How many of you guys like onions? [Demonstrates a positive response by raising his hand.] Oh I love onions, all right. How many of you guys like salsa? Hmm. How many of you guys are hungry right now?) I look at this Christian life. It's like an onion. (You know?)

I give my life to Christ—I get saved. It's kind of like peeling off the— And I know I'm under-doing this. I don't want to be disrespectful about what salvation [is] and what happens. But it's

like I take off the outer—you know that crusty, dry skin of the onion—okay, I’m there to the bare onion. And then God does His work in me as I surrender to Him. (And) He tends to kind of peel back the layers and go deeper and deeper throughout seasons of our lives.

Now for me, some of the issues I’ve struggled with my whole life—

- One would be insecurity. I used to be as insecure as the night is dark.
- Another one is my cell phone—no, I’m just kidding. [Directed to an attendee whose cell phone just rang] No, I’m just picking on you.
- Another one is this need for approval. (I mean) I want people to like me, I really, really do.
- Another one is just this drive to succeed. I’m telling you, I am going to succeed. I’m not going to fail. I’m not going to be a loser in life. I am driven to succeed. I’ve seen what losing and failing is all about, and I am not going to go there. (And) I’m going to do whatever I can to push hard to succeed.

Those are some issues that I have struggled with just to name a few.

(And) those particular ones—I thought—were done with years ago, going through a painful season, one at a time of having to lay those down; where God’s peeling the onion back layer by layer and having to lay it down and say:

- Okay, God, I surrender this in my life.
- All right (all right) I am who You say I am.
- I don’t need to be so insecure or crave people’s approval because I’m accepted by You.

—all this kind of stuff. But what I’ve found in my life is that they (kind of) crop up every few years. I don’t want to discourage you, but for me what happens is I find some of these same old issues come up and God takes those same old issues and brings them to a newer and deeper level of surrender. (Because) what I thought was, “It’s gone” was just (kind of) clipping off the top. It will come up again. He’s doing that where He’s peeling that layer back.

Where is God peeling the layer back in your life? What’s your issue?

Surrender: *Now that I’m a Christian, I am surrendered to the work of God in my life.* That—

- Knowing that I am saved and what that means (and)
- I am now a person who’s continually surrendered to the work of God in my life

—pulls us out of that spiritual performance/works vertigo and gets us back on course. We see the horizon. We level off and we start to grow. And we begin to be transformed spiritually by the work of God in our lives.

The Christian life is meant to start at a place of *being* and not *doing*. Now, do we do? We do...do; there’s a lot that we do. We *do* love our enemies. We *do* all that stuff. But here’s the deal: we begin to do it supernaturally. Do we fail?—yeah. But if we just approach it as a list of things to do without the power of the work of God in our lives, we will fail every time.

Now that I’m a Christian, this is who I am. And it comes from *being* a person—

- Being someone who’s saved
- Being someone who’s surrendered to the work of God in our life

And when we are *being* that person in an imperfect way, those higher moral laws (and stuff like that) tend to happen more naturally; because it's coming from who we *are* and not just what we *do*.

I tried to think about: Okay, what's an image or a picture I could paint for what it means to be a follower of Christ with our Heavenly Father—

- Throwing ourselves in His arms
- At His mercy
- Receiving His grace
- Not performing (and)
- Being the person that He wants us to be

What's an image—how could I portray what that really looks like? And I came across this video of a young man named Rick Hoyt. Rick is a quadriplegic, who at some point in his life wanted to do a marathon and then he wanted to do a triathlon. And his dad—knowing it was impossible for him to do this—got involved. I'm not going to over-interpret this. I'm just going to let the Spirit of God speak to you as you try to say: Well, okay, what does that mean in my relationship with my Heavenly Father? So let's check this out.

[Video plays with the song, *I Can Only Imagine*, by MercyMe as accompaniment to the scenes from Rick Hoyt's life. Several scenes are shown of Rick and his father, Dick Hoyt, competing together in various athletic competitions including marathons and triathlons. Dick pulls Rick in a boat with a rope attached to his body as they swim, carries him in a seat attached at the front of a bicycle, and pushes him in a specially designed wheelchair as they run. The video ends as a single the word displays on the computer Rick uses to communicate: CAN]

[Pastor Scott resumes at the video's end:] Jesus says in *Matthew 11, verse 28*—

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. {Just rest a little bit.} ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV)

I believe that is the essence of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

- I have rested from all my works.
- I've rested from trying to perform.
- I've rested from doing only what He can do.

He is the One. Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for our sins. And before He died, He said, "It is finished." [*John 19:30 (NIV)*] It is done!

And when we become a person of being—

- I am saved (and)
- I am surrendered to the work of God in my life

—all the "to do" stuff—which is great—keep doing, but it becomes more natural and life-giving and freeing. He gives rest to our soul. Let's pray:

Father, we thank you so much that You do command us to love our enemies. And I pray that You'd give us the ability to do so in seemingly impossible circumstances.

Lord, I pray You'd help us to get out of spiritual vertigo, to get back on course, and realize that living this life is not about doing, but it's about being. It's about being a person who's surrendered to You. It's about being a person whom You are doing Your work in (us). It's by grace, it's by faith, and it's by trusting in You, God.

With our heads still bowed and our eyes closed. If you're at a place where you say: Scott (man) I am, honestly, (I'm) in vertigo. I'm fatigued. I'm feeling exhausted. Maybe I'm critical. I'm judgmental. I am just—I'm in vertigo—I might be all the way upside down. I've been trying to live this life by doing and working my way through it. And I just need the help of God right now to get me out of that position of being in vertigo. Scott, pray for me. I'm in spiritual vertigo and I want to get right-side up and get on the right track. If that's you, just lift your hand real quick because I want to see how many I can pray for here in just a second. Okay. Everybody else is good. Amazing! I still don't believe you, so I'm going to pray for all of you.

Father, I thank You so much that You help us in our human need:

- Our need to perform
- Our need to be accepted
- Our need to work things out

And, God, I pray that You'd help us to see right-side up, to go on the course of being one who understands: I am saved by grace through faith. It's a gift from You and I celebrate that today. I'm thankful for it.

And, Lord, help us to be a person who's constantly surrendered to Your working in our life. Peel back the layers of our lives so that You can heal us, You can strengthen us, and You can bring us to a place where You are glorified through us.

Our heads are still bowed and our eyes closed. I said a moment ago that maybe you're hearing this for the very first time—this whole saved and surrendered thing. Or maybe you've been coming to church for a long time, but you've never made that clear decision where you've made a beeline to the cross and said: God I ask You to forgive me. Forgive me of my sin. Jesus, save me. I need Your grace in my life. And I'm not ever going to try to earn that grace, but I want that free gift right now.

If that's you and that's your prayer today—you say: Scott, would you just pray for me where I'm sitting? I want to know this Jesus that you're talking about. I want to know God's working in my life. And I want to make that decision today where I say: Jesus, would You be the Lord of my life? Would You save me and be the Lord of my life? If that's your prayer today—you say: Scott, that's what I want. I want you to just lift your hand right now and be bold.

Come on, heads bowed, eyes closed, hands lifted. I see you two guys over here. Come on, lift your hand; I want to see how many I get to pray for—I want Christ in my life; pray for me. I've got you right back here in the back. Who else?—Jesus save me and change me. Ma'am, I have you over here to my left. Pray for me; I want Christ in my life. I don't want to leave here without knowing Him. Sir, I've got you right there in the back as well—praise God for you; good for you. Anybody else?—Scott, pray for me; include me in this prayer. I've got you guys right over [here]. Ma'am I've got you to my right.

We're going to pray together as a family. Got you right here, buddy; good for you. We're going to pray together as just a community—as a family—and we're going to call out on God. For those of you who lifted your hand, I want you to pray this. (Because) I promise you this—I *do* promise you this—because Scripture backs it up that when you call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. [Acts 2:21 (paraphrased)] That's what we're going to do right now. So let's pray this together—say:

Father God, this morning I'm surrendering my life to You. Please forgive me of my sin—my mistakes. Be the Lord of my life. Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God, that You died for me, and that You've risen from the dead. So live in my heart. Be my Savior. I'm surrendering my days to You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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Even his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

John 6:60
(*New Living Translation*)

Legend:

(**words in parentheses**) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[**words in square brackets**] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{**words in curly brackets within indented quote**} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*