



MORE GRACE. LESS GRIEF.

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1 Thessalonians | October 22, 2023

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All right, we're gonna finish a book of the Bible. Is that all right? You guys good with that? Alright, we're in, uh, first Thessalonians chapter five. And, uh, before we begin, uh, last week we, uh, talked about the end times the second coming and it was, uh, corresponding with the war in Israel. I picked my sermon series a year in advance and sometimes, uh, God's word and our crazy world just line up. And so if you missed it and uh, you wanna find it, just go to [real faith.com](http://realfaith.com). And millions have watched the sermon from last weekend. And it's a real honor from this beautiful church family to get Bible teaching out to the world. And so, uh, this week as well, turned it into a book. Literally the final edit was done as I was walking down. And so, uh, if you're interested in it, if you're online, you grab the QR code for a gift of any amount, we'll send it to you. Uh, it's an ebook war in Israel. And the question is, will the Hamas spirit trigger the end times? Uh, that book was written, as I said, this week. It includes a special interview with my friend, uh, John Lovel, uh, army Ranger, talking about what this is going to look like going forward practically with boots on the ground. If you're part of our church family and you're in our database, we're gonna send a free digital copy for you tonight. Uh, 'cause I love you and I just want you to have it. In addition, next week we're going to start a brand new book of the Bible. And, uh, there is a study guide with it and it also talks about the antichrist, uh, the man of lawlessness, um, judgment hell, and the second coming of Jesus. So it'll be perfect to start right around Halloween. And so, um, and so if you want a free copy of that, we'll give that to those who are online or in room. I'll, I'll send that to you right now if you scan the QR code. Uh, that being said, uh, let me pray and, uh, we'll get to work in this great book of the Bible. Lord Jesus, thank you that you are over history, that everything that we are dealing with, you are the Lord of and over God. I pray as we open your word today and we finish this tremendous book of the Bible, we invite the Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us, inform us, correct us, encourage us and instruct us. And Lord, as things get darker, we want to get healthier. And so we ask for the grace to learn today in Jesus. Good name. Amen. Alright, so let me jump right in. Um, it's been a crazy week, amen. Just a very weird, weird week to be alive on planet Earth. If you think about it, the nation of Israel is about the size and population of New Jersey, and now it is the fulcrum for the potential triggering of World War iii. And we are on the precipice of boots on the ground entering from Israel to Gaza. For the first time in 50 years, the nation of Israel is at war. And some are thinking that we are on the precipice of World War iii. Most military strategists are saying that this is the closest that we have been to World War since the Second World War ended. This leads as well to lots of questions. Are we nearing the last days and the end times? This is one of the major themes of First Thessalonians. Every single chapter mentions the second coming of Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. And what we may be looking at is the nation's aligning, as is prophesied in Ezekiel 38 and 39. We dealt with this last week invading, trying to destroy Israel and her allies. And so what this leads to is a lot of questions. And the reason that Paul writes First and second Thessalonians, the people in that day felt like you do. There were wars, rumors of wars, there was conflict. Their pastor was out of town because a riot had emerged and their lives were in jeopardy in danger. And so they had a lot of questions. When is Jesus coming? And how will we know that he is coming? They thought he was coming soon, and it was 2000 years ago. And let me just say, I don't know when he's coming, but I know we're closer. Amen. And so our hope is in the second coming of Christ.

Now, what we're sensing today and where this world is going is toward division. And we started to see it, um, on college campuses this week as there were many students that were anti-Semitic, and against the nation of Israel. And by correspondence, Christians who stand with the Jewish people, we saw this as well in places like Michigan, where thousands of high school students walked out in protest shouting Allah Akbar, which means our God is greater. A bunch of those are foolish white kids who did the same thing during BLM and don't even know what they're talking about. But that is a declaration of spiritual war. Our God is greater. We're also going to see war in an urban area, and we're right on the precipice of it. Israel is preparing to enter into Gaza. And what you have is terrorists using human beings as a human shield. They're hiding in buildings and synagogues and mosques and underground. And the result is that when the Israeli forces enter in, this is going to get ugly quickly. What we see right now in Ukraine that when you're fighting for your own turf and home, you fight differently. And thirdly, we are having an uptick in anxiety globally. And if you look at the war in Ukraine, they're trying to protect the border. You look at the war in Israel, they're trying to protect the border. And then you look at America, we don't have a border. And the result is we know that bad actors have entered into those two nations. And our nation is wide open. Millions of people we know. We have people that are on the terror watch list that have come into the United States of America. We have no idea what they're plotting or planning. And the point simply is this, we looked at it last week, he talks about labor pains. As we get closer to the second coming of Jesus and the birth of eternity, there's more frequency and intensity we find ourselves there. And what is happening is an uptick in increase in anxiety. True or false, true anxiety. And anxiety is a contagion. It is spread between people. I was doing some work this week for a family system series I'm gonna do in December, and they say that, uh, people live in relational networks and they live, uh, emotionally connected and they pass emotions one to the other. And the emotion that passes most quickly and deeply is anxiety. When you don't know what's gonna happen, you have anxiety. Right now, we don't know where history is going, we don't know where the economy is going, we don't know where the world is going, but it doesn't look positive in any regard. Causes anxiety, two levels of anxiety. One is chronic, the other is acute. These are the clinical categories. Do we true or false today? Just have lots of chronic anxiety, traffic, bad news. We're heading into a presidential election. We're in inflation. Uh, there's just chronic, oh, and by the way, there's wars. Um, there's the threat of World War iii, just chronic. And then there's acute. And this is now where not just the issues in the world hit, but uh, fix my mic. Not just the issues in the, I have so much testosterone, my beard grows during the sermon. Um, it does, it does. It's a situation. I'll be in ZZ top by tomorrow morning. Um, so, uh, this one's live on the internet. I I don't know where we're going. Um, and so what, what happens when you get, um, when you get acute stress or anxiety as well, all of a sudden now you're sick. Your marriage is struggling, your family is not doing well. One of your children is a prodigal. You get in a car wreck in addition to all the big stuff, you've got your own stuff. And the result is massive anxiety. And here's where Paul is directing them. He's directing them to return to joy and find their tribe. That's gonna be our sermon. That ultimately things may not be okay, but God wants you to be okay. And not everybody's going to make it, but God wants his people to all make it. And so what we're going to deal with is this major massive mega theme in First

Thessalonians. And that is the return to joy. As bad news comes and labor pains hit and anxiety rises, you're going to, uh, depart from joy. But then you need to return to joy. And so we, we dealt with the end times last week. We're gonna deal with the end times next week in the middle. It's like, catch your breath, check your soul. Get ready for what comes next. Here's where he began. In one Thessalonians one, four through six, we know brothers love by God that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in Word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction. And you receive the word in much affliction. And here's the line with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Early in the book, what he was telling them was, you have a lot of anxiety. That's why you have all these questions about the last days, the end times the second coming of Jesus. Where is history going? And he begins by saying, I wanna honor you and I want to encourage you that through the Holy Spirit, you can return to joy. You need to return to joy. That's what I'm telling you. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, you can return to joy. So you are made by God to live in joy. Before Satan and sin entered into human history, all there was was joy there. There was no sickness, no suffering, no death, no lies, no destruction, no disease, no wars, no elections. It was fantastic. And then Satan and sin entered the picture. And all of a sudden now there's a lot of anxiety. You can't be healthy in anxiety. You can only be healthy in joy. And life is going to cause you to depart from joy into anxiety. But then you need to return to joy. And so number one, what I really am hoping that this sermon is going to do for you, or I should say the Holy Spirit would do through the scriptures by this sermon, is help you to return to joy. Um, in addition, you, you can still care, but you can't carry all the way to the world. And then number two, the second thing that he tells us is you gotta find your tribe. He's writing a letter to a church. And what he's saying is you gotta find the, like-minded people to do life with. The world is very divided. We want to be very united. The world is very anxious. We want to be very joyful. The world is attacking one another and we wanna be caring for one another. We're not the world. We're the church. And more than ever, in troubling times, you've gotta find your tribe. We're the people that love the Lord that I can have a friendship with. We could pray for each other. If you're married, these are our friends that we do double dates with. If they have kids, we do the play date. And here's what we're finding. There was a statistic that came out this week and it talks about loneliness. Being lonely has been found to have the same public health effect as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Just 22% of churchgoers are considered lonely, which is a much lower level of loneliness than the general population. The statistics show that people go to church and they make friends, they find their tribe and they return to joy. So thank you for being here and we love you and we're honored to have you and joy. And the return to joy comes with three things, people, places and things. We want the church to be the people that help us return to joy. Amen. That's why we're here places we want, literally our property and the park out front. Thank you for that to be a place where you can return to joy and things like prayer and worship. And so he's writing to a church family that is meeting together. They are God's people and they are gathering together in a place. And they are hearing the word of God, singing and praying so that they can return to joy. So here we go. We're gonna jump right into, uh, one Thessalonians five. And what this is, this is Paul sort of giving your soul a checkup. When you go to the doctor, he has sort of a checklist for your body. This is like a checklist for your soul. And what he's going to do is help you ascertain whether or not you're enjoy

or anxiety and how to return to joy. And how we can be a people that are a tribe, that love one another and do life together. And as we're going through this list, and I'll hit it rather briefly, if the Holy Spirit brings to mind a person or you see a face or hear a name, consider that that might be a ministry assignment for you. There may be someone that God is calling you to go serve in some way. We'll jump right in. First Thessalonians five, 12 through 13, we ask you brothers to respect those who labor among you and are over you. That's leadership. Our world doesn't even believe in this, which is one reason it's so messed up and admonish you and esteem you, uh, esteem them very highly in love because of their work. What he's saying is, wherever you're at, if you have a good leader, respect and honor them. Thank them. If you've got a good boss, just tell 'em thanks. They'll, they'll pass out. You may need to do CPR 'cause they've never heard that. But just say thanks. And let me say this as well, I'm gonna verbal process a lot in this sermon. When you see a police officer say thank you, when you see a, a fire, a first responder or firefighter say thank you. Um, when you see a soldier in uniform say thank you, right? For those who are leading, it's, it's thanking and honoring. And we live in a culture of complete dishonor for leadership. And, and we are not the world. We are the church. We believe in honoring leadership and respecting leadership. And ultimately as well, if you've got a good teacher, tell 'em thanks. If you've got a good mom and dad, tell 'em thanks. If you've got a good pastor, tell 'em thanks. You don't have to tell me. Uh, uh, but, but, but no, you know, if you've got a leader who caress about you, just respect them. And let me say this, I feel very, and on behalf of the leaders here at our church, we feel very loved and respected. This is not an issue for us. We feel very loved, honored, and respected. This is not an issue. So thank you. The next thing he says is, first Thessalonians five 13, be at peace among yourselves. What he's saying is, in the church, there should be a spirit of peace. Now in the world, is it peace or war? It's war. It's it's literal war. It's economic war, it's cultural war, it's political war. It's information wars. It's all war. And here we want it to be peace. We want it to be peace. Because ultimately, when all is said and done, there's only two cultures left. Heaven and hell. Heaven is going to be a culture of peace. The Bible uses this big Hebrew word shalom, and it means order and life and joy. It's the opposite of anxiety. It's joy forever. And what he's saying is, in the church, we need to have the culture of heaven, not the culture of hell. The the world we live in is decided to pull hell up and to live in that culture lies and deceit and conflict and bitterness and, and hatred and animosity and acrimony. We're the church. We wanna, we wanna live in love and peace and joy. So two things we can all do to help create a culture of peace. When you're wrong, say you're sorry. It's called repentance. And when they're wrong, say, I forgive you. It's called forgiveness. The truth is, we're all going to sin. We're all going to fail. And if you're the one who was wrong, own it. And if you are the one who was wrong, forgive it. And as we do that, there'll be a culture of peace. People will get along and keep short accounts and order. And if we don't do this, bitterness creeps in. And bitterness is a demonic stronghold and foothold that gets into a relationship or a family or a church family. Satan works through bitterness. The Holy Spirit works through forgiveness. If you choose to forgive, then you are inviting the Holy Spirit. If you choose to not forgive, you're inviting demonic spirits and they torment and torture you so that you become unwell. And what you think is, no, I'm going to punish them. And Satan is lying to you. He's saying, I'm gonna punish you both, and we love

you. So we want you to release them. And we want God to deal with them if they have wronged you. The next thing he says is, uh, and we urge you brothers admonish the idol. Idol. If you're a guy in your twenties, it's probably you, um, idol. So God gives us a certain measure of responsibility for our own life. Some people are idle, meaning they should be working. They're not working. They should be paying their own bills, but they're not paying their own bills. What happens in any church family like this, some people gravitate toward, toward being irresponsible and others towards being overly responsible. Okay? Lemme ask how many of you, if you were gonna error, you would be overly responsible. Okay? Raise your hand. I'm not gonna ask the irresponsible people 'cause they won't raise their hand. They're irresponsible. But here's what happens. It's gonna be like this for an hour. Um, what happens is irresponsible people show up in church and they're looking for overly responsible people to take their responsibilities. I need money. Could you give me some? No. It's called a job. I need a place to live. Yeah. Back to my first point. You need a job, right? And what, you know, I had a guy recently, um, I'll just talk, you know, uh, he came up to me, he is like, my wife and I are really struggling. Can you meet with her? I was like, dude, I'm not dating your wife. I'll just tell you that doesn't help your situation. I was like, I can coach you on how to talk to your wife. He's like, I don't wanna talk to my wife. I was like, well, it's not my wife, you know, 1, 2, 3, not it. Rock, paper, scissors, husband, you win. You know, husband always wins. This is your responsibility, right? And so what we can do is we can coach people to take responsibility. Well, we can't carry their responsibilities. Some of you right now, you're very disappointed. Like, stink. I left the last church. 'cause they wouldn't take carry of me. You know, Hey, we don't do piggyback rides, right? Well, we'll walk with you as a friend, but we can't carry you the idol. And lemme just say this too. This is the young men, whole generation of young men, not in the labor force, not launching, not moving out of their mother's house, not taking responsibility, voting for socialists, which is what people who are idle do. Uh, next verse. Uh, first Thessalonians five 14, encourage the faint hearted. How many of you faint hearted would explain your heart, right? If you had to pick a word to explain the condition of your heart, it's faint. How many of you know someone right now? They're, they're faint hearted. And what this means is they're broken. Like life's just beat 'em up and they need to heal up. Or perhaps they're just timid. They're more that shy personality, or they just have some fear and anxiety. They're scared. This is a tough season for them. What he says is to encourage them. And literally that means to pour courage into them. A faint-hearted person has lost their courage. I say this all the time to leaders. You can't lose your anointing, but you can lose your confidence. And there are times in life where you're still loved by God. You haven't lost your salvation. You're still anointed by God, but you've lost your confidence. I just don't, I just don't know. I don't, I don't know if I'm, I'm up for this, whatever this might be. And so to encourage someone is to pour courage into them. And, uh, let me just say that this ministry of encouragement is more needed in our day than perhaps any time in my lifetime. How many people right now, how many of you, you have too many people in your life that are encouraging just too, you like there? I mean, so many people encourage me. It's just, it's a bit much, right? No, we live in a world of absolute discouragement. So as God's people, we wanna be people of encouragement. One way you can do this is just by showing the progress. Somebody's like, man, I'm, I can't believe I did that. I'm

here. I'm so, yeah, but look at the progress that you've made. Don't just look at where you're at, but look at where you started. God's been faithful and he is not done with you. And sometimes this is just making little deposits. I was thinking about it some years ago. I had a, a dear friend of mine, he's a high profile sort of, well-known leader, so he can't really confide in a lot of people because of privacy issues. But he was struggling with a debilitating, uh, very rare, um, medical problem. It was a disease that was going to kill him. And there was no treatment or cure. And he was very concerned. He was faint hearted. He was used to being a strong, courageous, foot forward kind of guy. And this took all the confidence and courage out of him. And he, he was very concerned and it was very serious. And so I decided that, um, every day I was gonna send him a text with a scripture, something encouraging, something about the faithfulness of God or the goodness of God. Every single day. I sent him a text and prayed for him. And, uh, he called me about a year into this. And he said, God healed me. He said, I'm, I'm fine. I'm great. I'm doing fantastic. God healed me. Um, and I, I just had lunch with him a couple months ago. He lives outta state. He's doing great. Healthy back to work. All is well. And what he told me was, he said, I got, I got so forward to receiving the text every day. I started looking forward to it. And it just, it built this expectation in him, like encouragement is on the way. And he, uh, kept all of them. I think he printed them out as a book. And I just thought, man, that's what an honor it is. 'cause 'cause I've been there. You've been there too, right? Some days you wake up and you just feel like, I, I'm faint hearted today. I'm not doing so great. We're all human beings and we're gonna get there. People who take the time to encourage, or a tremendous blessing, and let me say this, it takes a lot of maturity to think of somebody other than yourself. The whole world is filled with people who are faint-hearted, wishing that someone would encourage them. And so the goal is be the one who encourages. In addition, he talks about, uh, help the weak. Uh, some people are strong, some people are weak. Sometimes a weak person is a brand new Christian. Like they're just getting started. And many of you are that way. Sometimes they're immature. They've not been obeying for a long season, and so they've not been maturing during those seasons. Some people are addicted, some sort of substances grip them, and they're in, they're in the, the fight of their life for health and wellbeing. Sometimes the weak are just discouraged. I mean, life has a way of really taking you out at the knees. And sometimes those who are weak, they're just broken. They're not bad. They're just broken. And so what he's saying is, when someone is weak, when they're not, well, the key is, um, help them and don't allow them to isolate. What happens with people who are weak. They're a little embarrassed by that. We've all been there. Like, you're emotional. I don't want people to see me this way. I, um, physically you're not healthy. I don't want people to see me this way. We like to present the best version of ourselves. The the entire purpose of social media is lying just to pres. How are you doing? Great. Jesus doesn't need to come back. I'm already living my resurrected life. And so, you know, and so what we do, we kind of, we just sort of fake and pretend like we're doing great. And when that happens, those people get a little embarrassed or a little self-conscious so they isolate. But what he says is, if you know those people, find those people, call them, text them, email them. Hey, I'm gonna pick you up and take you to church, and then I'm gonna take you out to coffee. Hey, I haven't seen you in weeks. When are we getting together? It's this ministry of pursuit for those who really are not in a good spot, okay? And,

and let me say right now, our entire world got habituated toward isolation. A few years ago during Covid, all of a sudden what we had was, we had people who were, uh, to quote these scriptures, faint hearted and weak, and they isolated. And did that make them better or worse? Only worse. And so we need to pursue people who are faint-hearted and weak. In addition, he says, be patient with them all. Uh, first Thessalonians five 14, be patient with them all. Um, lemme tell you two things. Um, people are annoying and your people, okay? Okay? Like, I'll be honest with you. Um, I was thinking about it. How does Grace do it? Grace is my wife. Like, I'll be honest, if I didn't have to put up with me, I wouldn't. But I'm stuck with me. How many of you find that there are certain people that just wear down your patience? Okay? Okay. All the mothers immediately responded. Uh, all the husbands got an elbow. Um, there. How many of you, there are people in your life that they're just moving too slow with their maturity and progress? Okay? And, and, and if you're a first time guest, that's why they brought you. Okay? So, um, little secret. Okay? Here's what I tend to find. I tend to find that I get more impatience with others than I do with myself. What I, I'm good at making excuses for myself. In fact, I've got a lifetime of practicing. And so what he's saying is, be patient with all well, you are like, what about that person that drives me crazy? Well, they would fit in the all, what about my two year old child? That's a terrorist. They would fit in the all. What about my teenage child? That is in the goth phase? That would be the all, okay? And so what he's talking about here is this being patient because we're, we all have our faults, our flaws, and our failures. And let me ask you this, has God been patient with us? Right? I mean, as soon as I start to get impatient with someone, I just say, you know, God's been very, very patient with me. I mean, don't do this, but if you've ever Googled me, he's been, been very patient with me, okay? Very patient with me. And so if God's gonna be patient with me, I need to be patient with them. And when they are starting to annoy me, maybe what I'm learning is that there's an area in my growth that God is being patient with me. So I won't be annoyed by their pace. Okay? Um, here's another one. Uh, one Thessalonians five 15. See, to that no one, uh, repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. We live in a world where, if, lemme say this, you can't treat people the way they treat you. That's right. You have to treat people the way Jesus treats you, because ultimately your response is your responsibility. Okay? And he says, don't repay evil for evil. Does he say there's no evil? No. Some people are evil and some things that people do are evil and categorically you don't need to say, oh, they're a good person. They got a good heart. No, they don't. That's why Jesus died. They, they, they, they had to kill God to fix their heart. That's how bad it was. So you can say that something was evil, and you can decide not to respond to evil with evil. When you decide not to respond to evil, with evil, what you're doing, you're blessing your enemies, and then you're leaving them to the Lord. And the Lord says, vengeance says mine. And so the lie is when you've been wrong, well, I need to deal with this. And God's like, you need to trust me to deal with this. And God is patient. And sometimes they get saved and sometimes they come to repentance and sometimes he just takes care of them. And the point is this, if you trust Jesus to take care of your sin, you must trust Jesus to take care of their sin. If he took care of you, he is gonna take care of them one way or another. And what happens is, when you get triggered, when somebody says or does evil, you're gonna get very emotional and very anxious. You better return to joy before you make a

decision. If you make your decisions in the moment out of anxiety, when you're suffering evil, you will almost always multiply evil rather than bring good to overcome evil. Right? And these are the verses to memorize so that when those moments come, and then here's the next one, and this is perhaps my favorite, and this is the theme. Uh, first Thessalonians, uh, five 16, rejoice when always, always is that a little harder lately, right? Uh, rejoice always. And what this doesn't mean is that we pretend that everything is good. He just told us that some things are evil and there are always these kind of Ned Flanders Christians, how you doing, neighbor? Having a great day? Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. You know, um, those people, they don't deal with reality. They don't deal with reality. But what he's saying is, 'cause in context, he just says, um, evil and joy. Well, how can you endure evil and have joy? Will you need to return to joy? And rejoicing includes prayer and singing and praising and thanking God for who he is and what he does. Um, I've shared this before, but it's, uh, it's an analogy. I, I believed alive for many years that there were good seasons and bad seasons. And in the bad seasons, I wouldn't have joy. And in the good seasons, I would have joy. So I was in a bad season. I just needed to kind of suck it up and grind through it. And then the joy would come when the season changed. And if you believe that, and here's what I learned, life is all bad seasons and good seasons. And so if I was waiting, 'cause my thought was okay, there's bad, there's good. As soon as I've dealt with all the bad, then I'll go over to the gut. I'll, I'll, I'll just live in anxiety. And once I've sort of fixed everything, then I'll move over to Joy. And it's like two train tracks that are constantly running parallel. There's good and bad. There's an anxiety and joy, there's a reason to be really angry, and there's a reason to really rejoice in every moment of every season. True or false? True. Okay. So what he's saying is, when you're in your life, evil comes or anxiety comes. You can just literally spend too much time traveling on that one track of just frustration and angst and anxiety. And he says, no, get over to the other track. Look for the joy. Look for the reasons to rejoice. Look for the reasons to be thankful. At our dining room table, the kids, we called these thankful prayers. What are you guys thankful for? Just let's spend some time thanking God. That's rejoicing. And so in every season, it's looking for the joy. And the promise is this, if we can rejoice always, that must mean that in every season and circumstance, there is some reason for joy and rejoicing, right? Sure. A funny story with you, it comes to mind. Uh, when our kids were little, we had this phrase, at least you're not in hell. Um, we had an odd family. Um, but it started when one of the kids were little 'cause we were teaching 'em about hell. So then anytime something bad happened, they'd be like, least you're not in hell. They'd be like, I've got the flu. At least you're not in hell. I don't want chicken nuggets for dinner. At least you're not in hell. Uh, that's not the kind of ice cream I want. At least you're not in hell. It kind of became our, it became our benchmark. You know, if you're above hell, good day. Because at the end of the day, what do we deserve? Hell, everything else is a good day. Just something to pray about. Okay? Uh, that brings me to my next point. Uh, one Thessalonians five 17, pray Without ceasing. Ceasing. What does that mean? Does that mean that you sit in the lotus position all day and drink herbal tea and find your inner self? If you're watching this in Sedona, stop immediately. That's not what this means. That's not what this means. It's a conversational lifestyle, right? How many of you have got a little kid and they're always talking to you and asking questions? You're a child. God's a father. It's this conversational

lifestyle. And, uh, this is one of the ways that you rejoice always. If you're praying without ceasing, you're talking to him and thanking him. Um, and so what's really wonderful is we have a God who's always listening. We don't need to go to a building at a time, schedule a meeting with a leader. Jesus is our mediator and he brings our prayers to the Father anywhere in any time. And it was fascinating. I was studying this week, I'm working on a series of family systems, talks for December. Um, and so I was studying brain science this week, and I came across the, the findings that sort of really were incredible. They say that when you're dealing with an issue, especially if it's anxious, if you talk about it, it triggers the ergo trophic center of the brain. It causes more anxiety and it drains your energy. And when they put people on brainwave testing, they also found, if they prayed about the exact same issue, it activated a completely different part of the brain. The tropho trophic part of the brain. And it does the opposite. It doesn't bring anxiety, it brings peace. It doesn't deplete energy. It increases energy. Literally, the brain science tells us that if you have an issue and you talk about it, you're gonna get worse. If you pray about it, you're gonna get better. In our world right now, are people talking about things or praying about things talking? And what happens with emotion is we trigger each other with our anxiety. You're like, I wasn't even, I didn't even know about that until they texted it to me and now I'm freaked out, so I'm gonna send it to some other people so we can all be freaked out, right? Oh, so you've experienced this, right? And social media is literally just like, how many people would like to be anxious with me today? Please, I feel lonely. Or you can pray about it. You can cast your burdens on him for he cares for you. And it doesn't mean you're not dealing with it. It means you're inviting him to help you carry it. So praying without ceasing is all those issues that come in that could break you, build you, all those issues that could drain you, energize you, all those issues that could cause you anxiety, can bring you joy. It's amazing. I just love how science eventually catches up with the scriptures. Just give it some time. God wants you to be the best version of you, and God wants the people in your life to experience the best version of you. And if you're talking to God all the time, that's going to bring about the best version of you. Uh, first Thessalonians five 18. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. This is complicated. Lemme try and articulate this in a simple way. Everything comes from God's hand or passes through God's hand. Now, God is good. He is not evil. God doesn't do evil, but sometimes he will allow things to happen to use them for a greater good. Okay? Uh, I'll give you an example. Was the murder of Jesus Christ good or bad? Yes. Okay. It was the worst thing that happened in the history of the world. And it's the best thing that happened in the history of the world. Okay? Evil was used for good. That's how God works. It doesn't mean that God does evil, God's good, but God's bigger than evil. So he can use evil. And the point is this rejoicing in every circumstance, uh, it's because it is God's will for you. Whether it's from his hand or through his hand. He allowed it to come to you for a purpose and a reason. Two things you need to know. Number one, when the tough times come, God is not punishing you. This is a tremendous lie that the devil tells hurting and suffering people Jesus already suffered and was punished for you on the cross. Therefore, it would be double jeopardy for God to punish Jesus. And you, you're not being punished, you're being prepared. It is not to punish you, but to prepare you, whatever you're going through. And so whatever you're going through, just say, okay, this is not what I have

chosen, but apparently it is what has been chosen for me. I am going to accept it. I'm not going to become bitter. I'm not going to rebel against God. I'm not going to question God on those difficult dark days. I will process with God. I'll pray to God. It says to pray without ceasing. We're gonna have a lot of conversations about this. And sometimes it's gonna be through tears like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, up all night. I I'm struggling right now. We need to talk about this Lord. But ultimately, as you're in it, you find these two questions need to continually return to your mind. Number one, what am I learning? Number two, who am I becoming? If God has allowed it? It must mean that there is learning for me and maturity for me in it and through it. This is not in my notes. Um, I'll just say this. Um, I didn't want to move to Arizona. I didn't want to start over in my mid forties with my reputation burned to the ground. I didn't want my kids to leave their school and their friends. I didn't want to say goodbye to a bunch of people that we cared about. I didn't wanna move away from my parents and my relatives. Uh, I didn't want to start over. And it was the greatest gift of my whole life after Jesus, grace and the kids, I'm shocked every day like, this is the best season of my whole life. I'm, I'm happy, I'm joyful. I'm having a great life. I'm loving it. And people are like, do you like what you went through? No, there was a wood chipper and my options were headfirst or feed first. I'm like, is there another option? And on the other side is just blessing and the provision of God. And in the front everybody's like, oh, he is got a better plan. Like, I don't know, man, I don't, you know, like there's no guarantee. But here's what I can tell you. My God is good. My God is faithful and my plan is not his plan and his plan is better than my plan. That's what I've learned. I dunno, Give thanks in all circumstances. That's his will for you. Just lean into it. How about this one? Do not quench the Spirit, right? God, the Holy Spirit lives in you. Some of you don't understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit as well as you should. Some of you were in bad Bible teaching or weird churches. And in those, there's the Trinity, the Father, son and Spirit is like the Father's, the mean one. Jesus is the nice one, and the Spirit is the weird one, right? And you're like, I don't know what to do with the weird one. The Holy Spirit doesn't make you weird. He makes you like Jesus. Some of you have a personal relationship with Jesus. But I wrote a whole book on this called Spirit Filled Jesus. Jesus lived by a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. You can't be like Jesus without the Holy Spirit. And so to, to not quench the Spirit is literally not to fight him, not to resist him, but to surrender and submit. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit's like a win, right? So set your sail right, release your kite, submit to his will. Here's a few reasons why people quench the spirit. Number one tradition we're creatures of habit. And some of us were steeped in religious tradition. And it's not something that was in the word of God, but that's just the way we do it. Like, I was talking to a guy recently here, I was like, you know, at real men, we sing and we raise our hands. Ask one guy. I was like, why don't you raise your hands? He said, oh, I don't do that. We're Presbyterian. I was like, there's no Presbyterians in heaven. You know, like, do this. The Bible says to do this. And there's not a footnote that says, unless you're a Presbyterian, right? So you just, right? I mean, but, but the point is, he's, he's like, well, we don't do that. Well, you're wrong. The Holy Spirit wants you to lift. The Bible says, I want men in the church to lift holy hands, right? So lift your hands. And sometimes religious tradition gets in the way. Secondly, sometimes what's called legalism. And these are people who live by rules, not by relationship. And highly

written, oh, you can't do that. Can't do that. It's the wrong translation on the Bible. You're not singing in the right songs. It's like, you know what, if you got a wooden spoon, spank yourself. Man, I got no time for this. I got no time for this. And some of you, you're you, you're not free because you grew up under legalism. You're like, are we allowed to do that? Like, even laughing in church, I just, some of you right now, this is, you're like, are we allowed to laugh? We are. We are. I told you, heaven's gonna be fun. Everybody there is excited. Everybody's having a good day. So we wanna practice for there. And sometimes people like, oh, you can't laugh at church. Yeah, you can. We take God seriously, but not ourselves, right? We take God seriously. We take God's word seriously ourselves. There's a lot of material. We don't wanna waste that all. How about this one? Sometimes what quenches the spirit is just bad theology. There's a whole theological system. I won't get deep into it. It's called Cessationism and it says, God used to do big stuff and he doesn't anymore. He doesn't do supernatural miraculous things anymore. Yeah, he does. Yeah, he does. He better. I don't know about you. The world doesn't seem to be getting better. I hope God's still showing up and doing big things. He's done so in my life, in addition, sometimes it's just fear that leads to control. And so people are like, but if I'm not in control, you're not right. It's the Lord Jesus, not the Lord. Sally, you, you just gotta, you gotta go with it. You don't need to be in control. You need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the spirit is self-control. And lastly, um, sometimes quenching the spirit is just unrepentant and unbelief. I'm not going to change and I'm not going to trust. Here's my question. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you lately? What is he burdening you for? What is he convicting you of? Some people are like, God doesn't speak to me. Yes he does. You may just not be listening. Right? I, I believe the Holy Spirit is often speaking and people are often not listening. There's a corollary verse in Ephesians four 30, um, to this here, he says, do not quench the Holy Spirit. And if Ephesians four 30, he says, do not grieve the Holy Spirit. I did some work on that word. I'll just share it with you briefly. Um, it is a word that means to cause severe mental or emotional distress or sadness. When you quench the Spirit, you grieve the spirit. It can be the same word used for trauma. We live in a day when people talk about trauma. If you grieve the Holy Spirit, you are causing the spirit of God to experience the equivalent of trauma. He loves you so much. He wants to do so much for you and in you and through you. And he wants to heal you and unburden you. And he wants you to return to joy. And he wants you to be more like Jesus and live in the fullness of freedom. And when you quench him and you fight him, and you resist him, you grieve him. How many of you have got somebody you deeply love them and they're self-destructing? That's how the Holy Spirit feels all the time. Those who quench him, grieve him. And so right now, the Holy Spirit may be telling you, yes, you need to apologize for that. Repent for that. You need to start believing this. You need to spend more time with me. He loves you. In addition, do not despise prophecies. First Thessalonians five 20. Um, I would say first and foremost, don't despise the prophecies of the Bible. First Thessalonians is filled with 'em. We're gonna get into Second Thessalonians next week, antichrist man of lawlessness, second coming of Jesus, resurrection of the dead heaven and hell, all future events two unfold. And those are prophecies. What he's saying is start by believing the prophetic words of God. And then in occasionally, in addition to the scriptures, God will give a burden or a word or an insight to a person. And you need to consider whether or not that is

from the Lord. We believe that the spirit of God is still working and speaking, not authoritatively like the scriptures, but in ways to build up his people. I'll give you an example. I, uh, I've got two grandsons. They're amazing. Um, and, uh, yeah, like people, places and things. Like last night, the kids all came over and we had dinner. And uh, these are my favorite people. They're in my place and we're talking and eating and that's awesome thing to do. And I sat on the couch and I'm holding my grandson watching the Diamondbacks win. Yes, yes. It was great. It was great. It was like, it was awesome. I was like, if Jesus came back, I'd be like, just a minute. You know? Like, this is a good moment for me. This is a good moment. I'm having a good, I'm just kidding. Um, just found all the religious people like, hmm. So, um, but I was, so every once in a while somebody says, I was reading the Bible and God laid you on my heart and I wanted to send you the scripture, or I was praying for you and I felt like I was supposed to share. If you get one of those moments where you feel like God has something you share, don't say thus. Say it the Lord. Do not say that. Especially if you're a single guy wanting to date a girl. Do not say that. Then she needs to say, thus say, pastor Mark, you're a false prophet. Okay? Um, instead what you say is, I feel like I'm supposed to share something. I wanna share it with you. And then I want you to consider whether or not it was from the Lord. 'cause they have the Holy Spirit too. But every once in a while, God does speak through someone in a really unusual way. So back to my grandsons. I was up at a, a lake up in the mountains recently, and I was sitting at the shore of the lake and I was studying and reading and prepping the sermon. And, uh, there was nobody else there. This, uh, this man gets out of a truck and then jumping out of the truck are two boys his grandsons. I'm now, and this was like the week that my second grandson was born. And as soon as I saw the grandsons and they had their fishing poles, they're going fishing with grandpa. I stopped and prayed for my grandsons. It's like, Lord, awesome. I'm so looking, I can't wait until I can take him fishing. That's gonna be amazing. He walks by, I kid you not with his cute little grandsons. He looks at me and he says, wait till your two grandsons are bigger. You're gonna love fishing with 'em. I was like, amen. That's the word of the Lord, you know? Um, and sometimes God just drops one in your life to let you know that he's still paying attention. Um, how about this one? Uh, test First Thessalonians 5 21. Test everything. Hold fast to that, which is good. Test everything. There are three kinds of people, gullible naive people. They believe everything. Like it's on the internet. You're like, oh, please, no. Oh geez. The newscaster said it and he was wearing a suit. You know, like, don't believe it. It takes more than a suit to tell the truth, okay? Other people are totally jaded because they've been paying attention. Okay? Everybody's lying. Everything's a shell game. Everybody's a con artist. Discerning people don't believe everything. And they don't believe nothing. They don't believe everybody, and they don't believe nobody. They're discerning. And that's what he's talking about here, is to learn discernment. And it's very simple. Uh, test everything. If it's good, hold onto it. If it's bad, don't. How about this one, um, one Thessalonians 5 22 through 24 abstain from every form of evil. Now, may the God of peace himself sanctify you. That's making you more like Jesus completely. And may your whole spirit and soul and body that's all of you, be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He's coming. Right? And you're, and you're gonna meet him. I don't know when he is coming, looking at events, you know, it could be soon. He who calls you is faithful and he will surely do it. What he says is sometimes what

keeps you from intimacy with God is sin That's between you and God. And the key to maturity is to shorten the gap. To quote my friend Rt Kendall, from when you sin to when you repent and get it out of the way, if there's something between you and the Lord, well, first of all, you wanna live in holiness and not let things get between you and the Lord. But if something gets between you and the Lord, you wanna get it outta the way as soon as possible. And what he's talking about here is, uh, every form of evil, this would include our secret sins. And we all have secret sins. You're like, you know what? Nobody knows God's like I do. And it's hurting us. Sin isn't just breaking God's laws. Sin is breaking God's heart. He loves you. He's a father. When he tells you to do this and don't do that, he knows if you disobey him, you're gonna hurt yourself. This includes tolerating sin. Some of us, maybe all of us. We've got sins in our, it's like they've been there so long, I just kind of got used to him as well. We make excuses. I, you know, I'm in it's tough season. I, you know, for me, I'm Irish, and the Italians say the same thing, and the Hispanics say the same thing. And anyways. And so let me ask you this is the Holy Spirit convicting you. There's any sin between you and the Lord that just needs to get out of the way so that you can get closer to the Lord. Now's the time to repent. Just tell 'em, I'm sorry, Jesus, thank you for dying for it. I now renounce it and I return to joy. Uh, I love this one. One Thessalonians 5 25 Brothers, pray for us. He's telling the church, pray for your leaders. The Bible tells us elsewhere, pray for political leaders. And it says here to pray for spiritual leaders. And I would just encourage you, be in prayer for this church family. We're, it's a great season. We're growing, we're healthy, we're strong. It's joyful. It's like, well, how do we love everybody? How will we steward the resources? I don't wanna be turning people away. We've had services recently where they're standing in the back and they're driving away. 'cause they, they can't even get a parking spot. Like, okay, what do we do with all these dear people? If Jesus died for 'em, we wanna welcome 'em and, and our problems right now, every church has got problems. We have really good problems. I love our problems like too many awesome people. Okay, what a problem. Okay? But it's still something that we need wisdom for. So if you pray for wisdom, we would appreciate that. Um, just a few more. First Thessalonians 5 26. Uh, greet all the brothers with us. Holy kiss. All the single guys are like lifers, lifers, lifers, lifers. Um, lemme say this. Greet one and over the holy kiss. The Bible has principles and methods. The principles don't change, but the methods do. In some cultures, do they still greet by kissing on the cheek? They do. What cultures do that? I'm Irish. We don't Italians do it. French. French. We, we French do it. Okay, so there's some cultures, they still kiss Germans. No, no. They don't even kiss the people they're married to. They're not, they're not, they're not those kind of people. So let me just say this. Um, should we keep the principle greet one over the holy kiss? Yes. Yes. Should we use a different method? Yes. Because you'll get arrested for assault if you do this. And like, I'll just tell you dudes right now, I'm, I'm, I'm big on boundaries. And uh, like if you come up at real men and kiss me and quote this verse, I'm obligated to punch you. I'm obligated. Don't make me do it. So this can be a handshake, this can be the knuckles and lemme just educate the new guys. It's a three tap hug. Okay, men, this is the rule three. Tap hug. Right? How you doing, bro? Boom, boom, boom. Ow, Ow, ow. Four tap. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, Whoa. That's a gate. That's a gateway. That's a gateway. We're not listening to Elton John. No. Fort tapping. We're not doing this. Linger, linger, linger. No. Right. That's

why men carry the gun in the front. Just to let you know, not to linger or fort tap. That's why they do that. 1, 2, 3 out. Amen. Okay, we good? It's just, this is a public service announcement. Okay. I'm having a good time. You know, For Thessalonians 5 27, he closes with this, I put you under oath before the Lord. This is a covenant obligation to have this letter read to all the brothers. So this letter was written, Paul said, it's scripture. Peter says, elsewhere, it's scripture. They show up, they read it. It's a book of the Bible. They're all supposed to obey it. The point is this, the key to having a healthy church family. The key to finding your tribe, the key to returning to joy is to have the word of God be the highest authority in the center of your life, marriage, ministry, family and church the word of God. That's the big idea. Amen. And so, um, we'll bring the band up now. Um, we're gonna sing a little bit and, and just rejoice. That's what we're gonna do. But, uh, the Bible has 66 books, and right now I'll close with the last verse and First Thessalonians, but this is the 35th book of the Bible. I preach verse by verse, every single word in 30 years. And so I'm, I'm really honored to do that. Next week we'll start Second Thessalonians, and, uh, we're gonna jump into my 36th book of the Bible. And that being said, here's the last word and I love it. We're gonna get our hearts ready for worship and to return to joy and to rejoice and to not, uh, quench or grieve or resist the Holy Spirit. But be open to him meeting with us and ministering to us. Now, first Thessalonians 5 28, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be with you. See, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. A couple of things I wanna say as we close. Number one, God's grace always gets the last word. I don't know where you've been. I don't know what you've done, but I do know this. God's grace always gets the last word. That's why the last word of the book is, there is grace for you in Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Number two, um, there's always grace for you. God's grace is inexhaustible. Some of you're like, man, I have, I've, I've used a lot of God's grace. Well, it's, it's an infinite source. And he loves you as a father, loves a child and he has more grace for you. Third thing, God's grace is for today. And you won't get the grace for tomorrow until tomorrow. And oftentimes what causes us anxiety and keeps us from joy is we're trying to figure out how to get the grace for tomorrow. It'll be there tomorrow. Uh, God's people in the Old Testament, they were walking around in the woods and they needed food. And God fed them when every day they got just enough manna or bread for that day, and they had to trust God will deliver again tomorrow. They never got manna for two or three or four or five or six days. They got manna for that day. God's grace is for today. God's grace will be there for you tomorrow. And if you look back on your life, has he proven to show up every day with the grace you need for that day? And the answer is yes. And then here's what I feel inclined in the spirit to tell you. Before I close. As I was praying for you today, I felt the Holy Spirit say, um, son, he always calls me Son. Um, there are people that give grace to others but don't give grace to themselves. Some of you, you can forgive them, but you can't accept God's forgiveness. Some of you, you, you, you love them, but you, you wonder if God really loves you. Some of you, when they're having a hard day, you, you give 'em a break and you put some grace on it. But when you're having a hard day, you don't give yourself a break and you don't put some grace on it. Some of you treat yourself in a way you would never treat your spouse. Some of you treat yourself in a way you would never treat your child. Some of you treat yourself the way you would never treat your friend. Lemme tell you this, Jesus already suffered. So you don't need to beat yourself up. And

he gives grace. And the grace is not just for them. The grace is for you. Holy Spirit, we invite you now to be in our midst, to minister to us, to speak to us. We don't want to grieve you, quench you, or resist you. We want to be filled by you so that we can return to joy and rejoice in the Spirit. Lord, I pray for all of these dear people who give me the honor of preaching the scriptures here in our church and around the world. And Holy Spirit, I pray right now despite everything that is going on in the world, it would cause anxiety that we would look up to the Lord Jesus over it all, that we would invite the Holy Spirit into the middle and center of our lives, and that we would return to joy and rejoice not because everything's okay, but because of the Lord Jesus. Everything will be okay. And until it's okay around us, you can make it okay in us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Love you guys. Thanks for letting me teach.