

When God Calls

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from 1 Samuel chapters 2 and 3. The passage is abridged, so please follow along on the screen or the bulletin.

Starting in verse 12, we read, Eli's sons were scoundrels. They had no regard for the Lord. Now, it was the practice of the priests that whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot.

Whatever the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificed, give the priest some meat roast.

He won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw. If the person said to him, let the fat be burned first and then take whatever you want. The servant would answer, no, hand it over now.

If you don't, I will take it by force. This sin of the young man was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt. But Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod.

[1 : 2 9] Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

So he said to them, Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. You know, my sons, the report I hear spreading among the Lord's people is not good.

If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender. But if anyone sins against the Lord, who will intercede for them? His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death.

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people. Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, This is what the Lord says.

Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestors' family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense and to wear an ephod in my presence.

[2 : 4 5] I also gave your ancestors' family all the food offerings presented. Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling?

Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel? Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares, I promise that members of your family would minister before me forever.

But now the Lord declares, far be it from me. Those who honor me, I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained.

The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age. And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be assigned to you.

They will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in my heart and mind.

[3 : 50] I will firmly establish his priestly house and they will minister before my anointed ones always. The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli.

In those days, the word of the Lord was rare. Not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place.

The Lamb of God had not yet gone out and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, Here I am.

And he ran to Eli and said, Here I am. You called me. But Eli said, I did not call. Go back and lie down. So he went and lay down. Again, the Lord called Samuel.

And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, Here I am. You called me. My son, Eli said, I did not call. Go back and lie down. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.

[5 : 00] The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. A third time, the Lord called Samuel. Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, Here I am.

You called me. Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, Go and lie down. And if he calls you, Say, Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, Calling as at the other times. Samuel, Samuel.

Then Samuel said, Speak, for your servant is listening. And the Lord said to Samuel, See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.

At that time, I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about.

[6 : 05] His sons blasphemed God and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli. The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.

Samuel laid down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision. But Eli called him and said, Samuel, my son.

Samuel answered, Here I am. What was it he said to you? Eli asked, Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you ever so severely.

If you hide from me anything he told you. So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, He is the Lord.

Let him do what is good in his eyes. The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up. And he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.

[7 : 06] And all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, where there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

This is the word of God. Amen. Thanks, Alan.

And thank you, Justin and Anabel. That was fantastic. So good morning, Watermark. I'm Nathaniel. As Chris has introduced me a little bit, but by day, I work as an English teacher at a secondary school, at a high school.

And in here at Watermark, I serve with the CG Oasis, as well as part of an amazing youth team. So I'm super excited to be bringing the word of God before you today.

And I just hope that wherever you are, wherever you're listening in and tuning in from, that you will just take the time to quiet down your heart. So that the word of God can come to you, and that you will just invite God to speak into your hearts.

[8 : 10] So there's a lot to actually cover today. So I'd like to just dive straight in and invite us to come together in prayer. So let us pray together. Father in heaven, we come before you, God.

You are the creator of heaven and earth. You are the creator of all things, ruler of all things. You are a beautiful God, a majestic God.

You are a God who knows us inside and out. And you are gracious and you are merciful. You're slow to anger and you're steadfast and abounding in love. And you know us.

You know us deeply. And so I pray, God, may you come before us today. May your spirit be with us. And I just pray and lift up the people who are listening right now. I pray and lift up the church of Watermark.

That God, may your word come to us. And may it really convict us of our deep-seated need for you. We really need you, God. May it not be our words that we are what we want to hear, God.

[9 : 14] But may it be your word that they hear. May it be your word that reaches us, God. Not what we want to hear. And so I pray, Lord, may we be convicted in our need for you, but also may we not be left feeling condemned because we have a hope in you, God.

And so I just pray, lift all these things up to you, lift Watermark up to you. And in Jesus' name, Amen. Okay. So in this series, we are looking through the book of Samuel.

And throughout this book, there's actually an overarching theme at work. That while man looks at the outward appearance, God actually looks at the heart. The humble who run to God, he exalts.

And the proud who trust in themselves, he lays low. And so last week, we actually looked at the first chapter in Samuel. And we saw how this woman called Hannah was despised by others.

And yet she ran to God. And God honored her by giving her a son named Samuel, who would then become the last judge of Israel. Now, the same theme of honor actually continues as we dive into the second and the third chapters of Samuel today.

[10 : 18] And we'll be looking at three things. First, what it looks like to dishonor God. Second, what it looks like to actually honor him. And we'll look at Samuel's response to God for that.

Last but not least, we'll be looking at our own response, as well as the hope that we have in him. And so today's passage is actually going to be quite challenging, and there's a lot to depth to it.

We won't be able to cover everything today. So it's something that I do encourage you to revisit afterwards in your own time. I just want to provide a little bit more of a background before we dive into it.

Now, in the Old Testament, God has chosen Israel to be his holy people, and they would be a nation that would become a blessing to all other nations. He had taken them out of slavery in Egypt, and he had brought them into a land that was filled with hostile nations.

And yet he had provided for them. He had settled them there, and he had established a priesthood. But then we come to the book of Judges. And early in the book of Samuel, and they were times of just chaos and disorder, because everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes.

[11 : 27] So Samuel chapter 3 begins like this. At that time, the word of God was rare, and there were not many visions. And so even though God had been leading the people of Israel throughout the entire journey, those very people had become deaf to that very voice that had been guiding them.

And so as we see in this passage, we start in chapter 2. We are introduced to Eli and his sons, Hophni and Finnehas, who served together with Eli as priests of Israel, and as the spiritual leaders of the people.

And so when God called upon his priests to serve him, they actually had really clear duties. Firstly, they were to offer sacrifices, so that the holy God could come and bless and deal with his people.

Second, they were to be mediators, who represented the people to God, and God to the people. They were also to teach the people God's law. And third, as representatives of God, they were to also lead holy lives, to demonstrate the goodness of God's word.

And if you go to the next slide, the high priest even wore a gold plate on his turban, that said, holy to the Lord. And so the point is this, the priests were pretty important, and especially in Israel's kingless kind of situation.

[12 : 47] And they wore significant responsibilities on their shoulders. But then we come to verse 12. Now let's zoom into the passage together. Verse 12 says this, Eli's sons were scoundrels.

They had no regard for the Lord. So history had again repeated itself. The sins of Eli's sons were very serious. First, we see them disregard the Lord by mistreating the Israelites' offerings to God.

So they took what belonged to God for themselves, and in doing so, they were actually disregarding the law of the Lord, which is God's word. In Leviticus chapter 7, it writes how the peace offering, the animal sacrifice, was meant as a sign of relationship with God, and devotion to God.

And so when an animal is offered up, actually the fat would be burnt to create this pleasing aroma, which was a symbol of giving the best to God. And out of his generosity, God would actually share a part of those offerings with his servants as well.

So the priests were allowed to take this three-pronged fork and plunge it into a meat and boiling pot, and whatever they took out would be theirs, as seen in verse 13. In addition to that, they could also take the breast and the right leg of the animal.

[14 : 07] So it can't be said that God was being stingy. But Hophni and Phinehas, for them that wasn't enough. They wanted everything. So let's take a look at verses 15 and 16.

But even before the fat was burnt, what was rightfully God's, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, give the priest some meat to roast.

He won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw. And if that person who dared to speak up and do what was right, and he said to him, let the fat be burnt first, and then take whatever you want, the servant would answer, no, hand it over now.

If you don't, I'll take it by force. It's been a pretty buff sermon. But Hophni and Phinehas, as you can see, they weren't actually spiritual leaders.

Instead, they were playground bullies. And their playground was Israel. Verse 17 says this, their sin was serious, because they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.

[15 : 15] Let's pause at the word contempt for a moment. Have you ever been looked at with contempt? It's that particular glance that utters nothing, kind of says everything.

And it's kind of like followed with a silence that leaves you reeling and thinking, what have I done wrong? It's a look that brings about this uniquely terrible feeling, because it's a look that gives no respect, and it gives no honor.

And it takes away all credit and all value. The Hophni and Phinehas, they treated the Lord's offerings with contempt. And hence, they had treated God's law, God's word, with contempt.

And in doing so, they had devalued God's honor. In verse 12, they are called scoundrels, worthless men. In Hebrew, the translation is men of belly hall.

And it means a worthlessness, or a uselessness, not because they lack human dignity, because they were created in God's image, but because they were not living according to God's purposes for them.

[16 : 17] As you will see, actually, this is quite a common theme throughout the book of Samuel, that God does not judge people's worth according to their title or their status.

In chapter 16, verse 7, it says that man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart, and their hearts are rotten. And so we have these walking contradictions, Hophni and Phinehas, who have all this authority and responsibility, they had titles deserving of immense respect, and yet their hearts were captured by their own desires, and they were worthless.

Rather than leading people to God, they led people away from God. In verses 12 to 17, they treated the Lord's authoring with contempt. In verse 22, they used their positions of power, and they took advantage of the women that were serving in the temple.

Again, they were holding the Lord's law of marital faithfulness in contempt. Hophni and Phinehas, they repeatedly took what was meant for honoring God, and they used it for themselves in self-indulgence.

And so, seeing God's representatives act this way, how do you think the people would then come to view God? When people see a church that is talking about God's love on a Sunday, but then live in greed and selfishness, or become very harsh and demanding at work or at home, it's the wonder some people say, I don't think I really want to know God.

[17 : 49] I don't really want to know that kind of God. And the thing is, even though deep down, we might look at some of our own faults, and then look at Eli's sons and think, I haven't sinned that badly.

I'm not that much of a scoundrel. The thing is, we should be worried about our own hearts, and our own response to God's word. Let's say, for example, that there's someone at work that you disagree with quite frequently.

Is there someone like that? They don't like the way that you operate, and you don't like the way that they operate. And one day, they blame you for a mistake that you haven't committed. And so, when it all comes in the clear, you're filled with frustration, and you're prepared to just lash out at them verbally.

And then at that moment, the word of God comes to you. And he says, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you. That's in Matthew 5, 44. And in that moment, you're probably thinking, forget that.

I'll love them later. They deserve a good telling off, and probably a lot more than that. But you see, actually, when we do that, it's not just that we sin, it's how we also justify our sins.

[19 : 01] And in doing so, we are treating God's word lightly. We're actually treating it with contempt. And that is just so, so challenging.

So when God's word comes to us, how do we respond? When King David committed sin, and the word of the Lord reached him, David came to God in brokenness.

Yet here in Samuel 2, verse 16, God's word comes to Eli's sons and says, what you're doing with God's offerings is wrong, but they reject it. And in doing so, they treated the Lord with dishonor.

And so in Eli's sons, we see the importance of honoring God's word. And there are actions we see that, when we allow sin to proliferate in our hearts and our lives, and we put ourselves and our desires above honoring God, we are treating God and his word with contempt.

And even if we try to put on a show, people will see through that facade. We can't really hide it. And this is really challenging for all of us, because others can see how we treat God in honor and in dishonor.

[20 : 12] And they are patterns of our lives that actually stem from our hearts, and they act as a witness for God and against. We actually see the same thing happen in Eli's heart.

Eli, who was the high priest of Israel. And if you look at the verse of the passage, Eli doesn't seem like a bad guy, but actually he took, he also put his personal honor above God's, just in a more subtle way.

Let's look at chapter two, verse 23 together. And in there, he confronts his sons and he says, why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours.

And that's followed by a few verses where he attempts to warn his sons against their sinful actions. And in his own way, he wanted only what was best for them. The problem is that Eli didn't really want to upset his sons.

You see, Eli wanted to follow God, but when it came to that crunch moment, he was too cowardly to stand up to his sons or to rock the boat and draw clear boundaries between what was acceptable and not acceptable behavior in order to maintain the honor of God and his word and his name.

[21 : 26] And so even though the people of Israel, they saw what was going on. You see this in verse 24. Eli let things go. He preferred to keep everything harmonious and allow God to be dishonored rather than cause a stir within his own family.

But God knows the condition of Eli's heart through all the layers on the outside. And in verse 29, God confronts him. He says this, Why do you honor your sons more than me?

By fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people, Israel. So how often do we find ourselves afraid to rock that boat or to lose something that we care about and become unable to honor the word of God?

It could be the fear of losing a friend when we share the gospel with them and all that kind of awkwardness that comes with it. I found that quite challenging personally, especially with some of my high school friends, especially when they bite back or they get offended.

It's not all of them. Or it could be that when we see a brother or sister that's making bad decisions, but we don't want to say anything out of the fear that they might get upset. I know I also struggle with this a lot.

[22 : 44] And actually, there are ways to do that lovingly and to do it graciously. But sometimes, in those crunch moments, we can place something else before God and his honor rather than trusting him with those difficult moments.

And so even though all of this may not seem as extreme as what Eli's sons were doing, it does pose the challenge of how seriously we treat the word of God, where our priorities lie and where our hearts lie.

And if our fear leads us to view the word of God lightly, and the trajectories of our hearts and the patterns of our lives lead away from God, the consequences are serious for everybody involved.

And so we come to the key verse in this passage. And this is in Samuel chapter 2, verse 30. In here, God says this, From Genesis all the way through, God says, And so in this passage, we see God cut the path of Eli and make way for this new priesthood, a new beginning, and a new chance at life to flourish in its place.

And this is very real. Because when God speaks to you, he wants to bring you life. Because left alone, you will surely die, just like in the Garden of Eden.

[24 : 24] And his call is actually that he wants you to live. And we see that call answered in Samuel's response. And so thus far, there's been a lot of doom and gloom.

But actually, though God's word was rare in those times, in chapter 3, verse 1, And the people were left in darkness. There's actually this beautiful image in verse 3, which says, The lamp of God had not yet gone out.

And Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord in that darkness, where the ark of God was. The lamp was the light in the tabernacle. And it actually represented God's presence in the midst of darkness.

And that God was still there working. And so in the midst of all the sins recorded in the judgment being pronounced on the house of Eli, this passage is punctured with little hints of God at work in the background, working through this little boy Samuel, ministering before him.

And visually, if we go to the next slide, it looks a little bit like this. And so the yellow part is all the sin and the judgment. And the green part is God working through little boy Samuel.

[25 : 33] And so chapter 3 is actually one of hope, because God calls to Samuel. And the way this small boy responds to God can serve as an example for all of us.

In chapter 2, verse 18, we first get this glimpse of little boy Samuel, ministering before God with a linen ephod, which only priests wore. He has no position and no authority.

And yet in chapter 3, God's word comes to him. And just like Eli's sons, Samuel actually doesn't know God yet. We see that in chapter 3, verse 7. When the Lord calls to him, he is responsive to the word, but he doesn't know where to run.

We see this three times in verse 4, verse 6, and verse 8, until Eli realizes that actually God is speaking to this little boy. And finally Samuel goes, speak, for your servant is listening.

Verse 10. And God does speak to him. Because you see, God's not about position. He's not about authority. He doesn't just pick the best.

[26 : 39] He calls on those who are willing to say, speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. By the way, it's not a fun message for Samuel. When the word of God comes to him, the message is that God is going to clear away corruption and all dishonor to his name, and to bring a new priesthood and a new king to rule in place of the old, in place of Samuel's own mentor.

And that's a lot to take in, especially for a little kid. If any of the youth are watching, it's kind of like, well, imagine coming up to Alan and telling him, hey, Alan, actually God is saying that he's going to be replacing you.

So you probably want to start thinking about getting out of here. It's quite difficult, actually. But of course, God doesn't leave little Samuel alone in all of that.

And the beautiful thing in chapter 3 is that we see that God is the one who takes the initiative to speak, because God is a God who loves to speak with us, to relate to us, to commune with us, and he longs for us to flourish.

Unlike Eli, Samuel does not dishonor God, does not make excuses. He doesn't treat God with contempt like Eli's sons did.

[27 : 52] So God calls upon the small boy, his faithful servant, to be a part of this new order, with good news that God's word is coming again to bring life. In chapter 3, verses 19 to 21, it says this, The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.

And all of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet to the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

Throughout the gospel message, there is this pattern in which God takes the nobodies, and he uses them to glorify his kingdom. And we saw that with Hannah last week as well.

So, just how real is that message to you? That God's not actually looking for somebody great, or somebody that's spiritually mature, and has got it all together to serve him.

Actually, no matter who we are, God comes to us with his word, and he wants to speak life into even the most private areas of our lives where we actually don't want him to get involved.

[29 : 06] Whether it's our relationships, or it's our finances, or it's some deep-seated bitterness or anger that's hidden within us. And then he asks us, will we respond like Eli's sons and push him away, or will we do as Samuel did, and come before him and say, Speak, Lord, for your servant is this name.

And so Hophni or Phinehas, or Samuel, honor God's word and give honor to him, or honor ourselves. Black and white, simple as that. Except that it isn't.

Because, as you and I know, we, like Israel, throughout the book of Judges, have a tendency to fall below God's calling for us again and again. Because alone, we cannot hit that high bar.

Like God calls on us to be like him, to be perfect, and to be whole. Samuel didn't hit that bar. Actually, he too had unfaithful sons.

King David didn't hit that bar either. In fact, the whole Old Testament is a story of how everyone is still looking for someone. We see that in Samuel 2, verse 31.

[30 : 16] God says, I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is on my heart and my mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always.

It's really cool because we get to be involved. When we read that, we might think at first that God is referring to Samuel, but he is not the one that Israel was waiting for. It is pointed towards King Jesus and our need for him.

That's good news for us because actually you and I deserve to be treated with disdain, just as Eli and his sons were because who hasn't disdained the word of God?

We deserve to be judged. For those of us who want to continue to live with contempt of God and his word, that is a very harsh message.

For those of us who, like Samuel, go speak, for your servant is listening, we don't hear a message of judgment. We hear one of hope. The good news is that the God who created us, who knows us inside and out, also knows that we are broken and that we are frail and that we too struggle with sin.

[31 : 29] And so last but not least, we have hope in God in the form of God's Son, Jesus Christ. In John 3, 17, it says, When the Son of God came, he came not to condemn the world, but to save it.

He didn't come to wag his fingers at us and smite us with a bolt of lightning. In God's eyes, we are not lost causes. And so when Jesus came, he came as God on earth.

So that through him, we might know God. Romans 8, 34 echoes that. And it says, Who then is the one who condemns? No one.

Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. In Jesus, we do not have a faulty mediator like Eli, like Hophni, or Phinehas.

Instead, we have a great high priest who is holy and pure, serving as the perfect mediator between us and God, interceding for us at the right hand of God.

[32 : 37] He is one who knows our needs even more than we do, and he represents us perfectly to the Father. And rather than animal sacrifices, you don't have to.

Okay. Rather than animal sacrifices, Jesus offered his own body so that all who believe in him would be made clean and righteous in God's eyes.

To make you clean and righteous in God's eyes. He was the only one who perfectly honored God. And so when you leave the stream today, remember this.

In Samuel 2, verse 30, God says, Those who honor me, I will honor. And those who despise me will be disdained. When Jesus died on the cross, he took on our sins so that he would be disdained and we would be treated with honor.

He took on all those sins on his shoulders, all the bad choices that we've made in life, all the times we've turned our backs on God, willingly or subconsciously, all the times that we have sinned against our brothers and our sisters who are our neighbors, our friends, and our strangers.

[33 : 47] He took on our shame, the people who scorned him, who spat at him, who laughed at him for being king of the Jews. And he took on all of that and he was despised so that we may not be in God's eyes.

He was disdained so that we could be honored. He came so that the evil in our lives won't be the final chapter. So that the sin that threatens to separate us eternally from God in death would be poured onto him and that we can return to the Father's influence.

Did you know that actually the cross is the ultimate place where we treat God with contempt? It's the place where all of our messiness, all of the grossness of life is scattered.

And yet it is also that very same place where we can find redemption and forgiveness, where we do not have to fear God's retaliation wrath for those who believe in him. It is where we can find hope and renewal, where we can find peace and security.

God wants us to be close to him, to be a part of his family so that we may be called children of God. He wants to give us honor through Jesus Christ.

[35 : 01] Yet he doesn't force it on us. So how are you viewing the word of God today? Where are you seeking honor from?

And who do you seek to honor above all things? In Jesus, he has exemplified a life of honoring God and not despising him.

He has shown that to us. And since he bestows that very same honor onto us and removes our shame and our sin, we can, through our great high priest, approach the throne of grace with confidence.

But we must not then turn and treat sin lightly. Let us not make excuses like Eli did. Let us run back to God, our Father, and allow him to speak to you like Samuel did.

And let us say, Father, here I am. Speak, for your servant is the Son. Let us pray together. I just want to invite you all to take a moment and to respond to God yourself.

[36 : 13] What do you think about two questions? How is God speaking to you today? And where in your life is he calling you to honor his word?

Where in your life is he calling you to honor his word? Let's take a minute. Father in heaven, we come before you.

And we thank you, Lord. We thank you that you sent Jesus to die for us. Amen. For many of us, we have experienced shame and guilt. Guilt sometimes that makes us want to run away from the Father rather than running too deep.

And yet you tell us that Jesus came and that he knows us. He knows all that sin. He knows of our guilt. He knows of our shame. Yet he doesn't scold us.

In fact, he's here as our great high priest so that we can return to you, God. It only means all that shame because he took that on himself. So, Lord, I pray that you will speak that truth in all who are hearing this message today.

[37 : 42] Father, may our everyday life be filled with moments when we run back to you, God, when we run back to your word and we take it seriously. Because, God, through your word, we can find your truth.

And in your truth, we can find life. Because without your truth, God, all that is around us is just brokenness and death. And we need you, God.

So let that just be very serious in us. Even in those moments where we feel challenged and we're tempted not to rely on you, God. We're tempted not to go to your word. Lord, I pray in those moments where you strengthen us and when you draw us to you, hold us close to you, and God, when we, through those challenging, difficult moments, Lord, come to know that we really need you.

And that you strengthen us and you speak to us. And so I pray for the Church of Watermark to just be amazing witnesses for you, God. To honor you above all other things so that other people can also come to know you and to honor you and through that to find life, to find purpose and to find freedom as well.

Lord Jesus, I lift up our church to your lift up city and home come to you, God. We pray all of these things in your holy name, Jesus. Amen. Amen.

[38 : 57] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.