

Grasping for MORE

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading today comes from the books of Exodus, Genesis, 2 Samuel, and Joshua. Please follow along in your bulletins. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Or his male servant. Or his female servant. Or his ox. Or his donkey. Or anything that is your neighbor's.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?

The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it, or touch it, or you will die.

The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[1 : 11] When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loin coverings.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? He said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself.

Now when evening came, David arose from his bed and walked around the roof of the king's house.

[2 : 23] And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

David sent messengers and took her. And when she came to him, he lay with her. And when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

The woman conceived, and she sent and told David, and said, I am pregnant. But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban.

For Achan took some of the things under the ban. Therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel. So Achan answered Joshua and said, Truly I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and this is what I did.

When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, I coveted them, and I took them.

[3 : 40] And behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it. This is God's word. How you guys doing? Good, good, good.

For those of you who knew, there's something to me about traditions or being consistent, so that's what I usually ask. And usually people go, hmm, good. And I have to go, well, that's not very good. And so they have to repeat it again. So how you guys doing? Great. Great, good. Okay, that's good. Need all the encouragement I can get. Hey, we are continuing a series that we started in June.

We looked at this idea of gospel and work. And so we did three of them in June. So if you haven't looked at them, I usually don't say go back and listen or anything, but I think it's worth listening to because we're trying to set a standard of what it looks like to be Christians in the workplace.

We're also using this book. It's by Tim Keller. It came out. We had two books for sale. And so these are still out there. We're not actually, we're selling them at probably 50% reduced rate. So don't buy a whole bunch and resell them.

[4 : 43] But I'm joking. For some of us. Anyway, so but buy one or a great gift and talking about what does it look like for us to be Christians and how do we handle our work and what does that look like to work well for the Lord.

And so we're going to continue doing that. So in the first three sermons, we talked about some things about work. And I'm going to just flesh out because we're, I'm just, these are assumptions. We looked in scripture and we said, this is what God's word says.

And so we're going to assume these things as we move forward in the rest of the five sermons. So we got two more today and next week. What we saw first in scripture is that God begins with work. So in Genesis, God's working in the garden and he's called us to continue his work in creation. So we're not just called just to sit here, but we're given roles and things that we need to be doing. We learned that work is in our DNA, that each one of us is made to work. It's how we're made. You often hear people talk about, I can't wait till I retire so I don't have to work.

[5 : 45] But the Bible says that you and I were made to work. It's in our gut. It's how God created us. We also learned that all work is for God, that everything we do is for God, that God is our ultimate boss.

And so if you're in the office right now and your boss is treating terribly and you're not getting all the appreciation that you feel like you deserve and you're towing the line and you're being a great Christian and you're walking and talking and being consistent, you get fired.

The Bible says, and that happens a lot, right? It does. So it doesn't always end up great. Your next job is probably going to end up great. Your first job, you might get fired. But the Bible says that God is your ultimate boss and in the end, he will reward you.

That he'll give you those things that you need. We talked a lot about how all work has value. There's not some work that's not valuable and the other work that's more valuable. That my job as a pastor isn't more valuable than your job.

And whatever you do, especially as housewives, I have the utmost respect for single moms or housewives and your jobs. Everyone's job is just as valuable, the Scripture says. And we all give glory to the Lord as we serve him in whatever we've called to do.

[6 : 51] We learn that our primary relationship in everything we do is with Jesus. That he is the primary center. So the questions we should be asking is, is this job drawing me closer to the Lord?

Am I feeling closer to Jesus after I work here? Are the choices that I'm doing in my job making me feel closer to the Lord? And so we talked a lot about that.

We said there is no such thing as sacred or secular because when we do that, we compartmentalize our lives. And so we live our lives differently. We come to church and it's sacred. When we go to work, it's secular. And we have different rules and different values.

And you just watch the news and you realize that people are getting all the rules and their values crossed over. And we don't talk about right or wrong. We talk about what's permissible, what's lawful. And we get in trouble.

But the Scripture says that we're all sacred. It's all sacred. Everything that we do is sacred. Work is our ministry. Often people say, I can't wait until I retire so I can go do an NGO and do something really thankful and worthwhile for the Lord.

[7 : 48] And the Bible says what you're doing right now is what God wants you to do. That he's not going to judge you after you retire on the NGO that you do. But he's going to talk and look in your life at what you're doing right now.

That's the sacred. That's why he has you here. That's your ministry. To be the best lawyer is your ministry. To be the best doctor. To be the best teacher. To be the best housewife. To be the best. All that is your ministry. So don't be looking out for things to do and say, this is my ministry and this is my work. The Bible says that our work is our ministry. We learned also that we live in a broken world.

We read in the passage in Genesis 2. We talked about it in depth. I think the first sermon that everything is broken. So everything is, we come to work and things are broken. And people are broken.

And systems are broken. And countries are broken. And we have to come into these brokenness and figure out how does God want me to redeem it? How does God call me to fix it? And sometimes we have no idea.

[8 : 44] We're like, I have no idea how I can make any sense of this. But the scripture teaches us that we're called to be a part of God fixing things. It might be just as easy as listening to a person and praying for them.

But it might be something even bigger than that. But we're called to do those things. And the last thing we talked about is rest. And we said that all of us are called to rest. Just as we're created to work, we're created to rest.

And that we honor the Lord and we glorify him just as much in how we rest and how we work. Now some of us, that's very difficult to do.

But the Bible says that you and I were created to rest. And we have this cycle of rhythm that we live our life out. And if we don't rest, we're being dishonest to the Lord. But we're also hurting our bodies.

Because our bodies are made for sleep and for rest. And so we have to struggle with what does it mean for us to have a Sabbath and how do we do that. And what does that look like in our lives.

And I was very honest.

[9 : 41] And again, teaching these things are very challenging for me. Because I feel like, man, I'm a long way from what scripture is calling us to. And I'm so thankful that the journey is step by step by step.

And God's grace covers each step that we walk. And so pastors are probably the worst people for Sabbaths. And you need to be continually praying for us and the staff so that we honor the Lord in our breaks.

Today I want to kind of change gears. And I'm going to look at something that is going to seem counter business-wise. Or counter what we've been talking about. Because I think that work is probably the greatest thing in our life that exposes our idols.

And our sin. I mean, how we work and why we work and what we do in our work is probably the greatest thing that points us to what is the idol in our life.

Now for me, it's work in my marriage. In marriage, sometimes you see in your marriage how you interact and you realize, well, I'm really selfish here. Hopefully you realize that.

[10 : 43] And you apologize to your wife, husbands. But work is also that too. But work, just something about it that exposes our idols.

Remember, idols are good things. They're things that are created. But we grab onto them and say, this is the ultimate thing. This is what's going to give me meaning. This is what's going to give me truth. This is what's going to make it through the day.

This is what's going to. How do you find your idols? Well, I don't know. Each of us have different idols. You ask the question, what is there in my life that if it was taken away, I couldn't live without? What if there's in my job that if I didn't have that anymore, I didn't have that corner office, or I didn't have that degree, or I didn't have that title?

What if it was taken away? I couldn't live with that. If that's something that's true in you, then the Bible says that that's an idol. It's something that you're trying to find hope and purpose and meaning and stability in your life.

And we need to worry about that. Because the Bible says that we serve, all of us serve. We either serve the Lord or we serve other idols. But we're serving something.

[11 : 45] So the question is, what do we serve? And so I want to look at this passage. And we're just kind of opening this up. So it's not going to be, wow, he taught everything. You might feel like he taught everything he knew about this. But we're just going to skim the surface on some of these things.

And I want to look at the most dangerous sin, I think. The most dangerous idol in our life. And I think without a doubt, and you've heard it read today in the passage.

And so what I want to do to start into that is I want to start with a true story. A true story, a good story. And it's a story that begins as all good stories should begin.

What? Come on, guys. There's only three beginnings of stories, right? There's long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. There's in a hole there lived a hobbit.

And there's once upon a time. Okay, so this is once upon a time. Can you hear that? Once upon a time. Once upon a time. And so I want to tell with you the parable of Caitlin. Okay.

[12 : 54] Once upon a time, there was a young six-year-old girl named Caitlin. She had loving siblings. She went to school and learned about the world and many other things.

She enjoyed outdoor activities. All was perfect. Then one day, her parents took her to the shrine of the Golden Arches.

Famous to youngsters for its food. Caitlin was so excited. There, she discovered the happy meal. Well named as a meal of great joy.

May I have it, please? She asked her parents. I got to have it. I don't think I can live without this toy. No, her parents replied.

We're not giving in to this ingenious marketing ploy. We're not going to buy it. But, but you don't understand, she pleaded. I want this happy meal more than anything else I've ever wanted in my whole life.

[14:03] And if I get it, I'll never, ever, ever ask for anything again. Never, not ever. No more complaining. No more demanding. Not for me. If you get me that happy meal and that toy, I will be happy the rest of my life.

Well, this seemed like a good deal to her parents. So we bought the happy meal. And you know what?

It worked. Caitlin grew up to be a contented, grateful, joyful woman who lived with serenity and grace her whole life.

Her life in many ways was hard, but she never complained. She would look at her happy meal toy and be satisfied. Just as Caitlin proclaimed to her parents that happy meal was all that she needed to be happy, she was grateful for the rest of her life, living happily ever after.

The end. Now, I ask you, does life really end that way? Does things really work that way?

[15:12] And what I realized in Caitlin's life and what I continue to realize in our life and my life is that we all have this problem. And this problem is called coveting.

I mean, it's sisters are greed and envy. But the main thing is coveting. And so what I want to do very briefly is I want to look at what is coveting. I want to give some symptoms of it. What does it look like in our life?

And I want to talk about how we deal with it. Now, I've said that coveting, greed, envy are the most dangerous of all sins. And what I mean by that is not that they have the worst consequences, but that we're blind to them.

I mean, coveting means to desire and to take things that you don't have and maybe in the timing that you don't want it. In Greek, the word actually means just to grasp for more. So if you had this bowl of M&Ms; and your kids wanted one more M&M;, and you say, hey, just take one more M&M; for the role.

And coveting is they come in and they just go, with their hand and they have a handful of M&Ms.; I mean, think about it in the Ten Commandments. All the other Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, go read them tonight.

[16:16] All of them deal with outward. Don't do this. Don't do that. Don't do these things. But coveting deals with our heart. Coveting and greed deals with things inside of us.

It deals with our attitudes and our thoughts. And these attitudes and these thoughts drive everything. Everything. More often than not, we don't even know that we have a problem with coveting.

We don't even know that we have a problem with greed. James and James, in his book, he said, you know, that what are the problems of these angers and these fights and these quarrels you have within you? He says it's the desires of your heart. You're coveting.

In Romans, in your bulletin, Paul says the same thing. Paul says, I was a Jew of Jew. I lived perfectly. I did everything righteously. I kept every commandment. Then all of a sudden the law came and it showed me coveting. And coveting just went boom, boom, boom, boom, hit me.

And I just realized, man, I have problems. Because coveting showed my heart. And it showed my desire. Paul would say the Christian life is like an onion.

[17:20] And you come to Christ and this Holy Spirit comes in and it cuts your onion in half. And you look at it and you see all the junk in your life. And you start to deal with those things. And all of a sudden the Holy Spirit comes in again and it cuts deeper. And you see more lines.

And you see more junk. And you're like, whoa. And then the Holy Spirit comes in and it cuts deeper. And you just see how much coveting and greed and problems we have with idols in our life.

And the scary thing to me is it's so deceptive. I've never had somebody come to me as a counselor or as a pastor and say, can you pray for me? I have problems. I say, what the problem is? They

said, I'm too greedy.

No one's ever said that. Usually they come and say, I'm lusting or I've cheated or I've hit somebody or I've treated my wife unfairly or I've done a bad business deal. But no one's ever come and said, I'm coveting too much.

Can you pray for me? But Jesus in his gospels, he talks about coveting and greed about 10 times for every time he talks about sex. I mean, he's talking about it all the time.

[18 : 23] Because he realizes that we have this problem with it as his people. And the biggest problem is it's hidden. It's quiet. It's silent. We don't know that it's there.

We're blind to it. The Bible says we're blind to our blindness. We're blind to coveting. It's all around us. It's in us. And we don't know that we're greedy. I mean, we can look at greed and we can say, that's greed.

Ooh, bad person. But when we look in our life, we don't see that. Because we're blind. It reminds me of when I was a Boy Scout and we went to this camp in the swamps of Florida and the mosquitoes were out of control.

They were just eating winds. And they were just chomping on us. And in my tent, we had this, our counselor who was taking us through this week on a canoe trip was his ex-marine.

And we're talking one night about what do we do with these mosquitoes? And they're killing us. And he goes, well, you know, the only mosquito that really bites you is the woman because she needs the blood to incubate the eggs inside of her.

[19 : 22] So she's the one biting you. But the only mosquito that makes the sound is the man. So when you hear the zzzz, that's a man. And he's trying to attract a woman so they can get busy.

So the woman is the one that bites you and the man is the one that makes the sound. So you're really in problem when you hear nothing. Because when you hear nothing, then you know that you get it, right?

The woman doesn't make sounds. She's sucking. The guy. So in the woods, you worry about not hearing and not understanding and not being aware of it. And the Bible says in the same way that's what governing and greed is in our life.

That we don't realize it. We don't hear it. We don't think about it. Materialism and coveting and greed comes into our life. And, you know, I've been praying about this a lot.

Because I think that we live in a time and age and in a society that loves coveting. That loves greed. I mean, think about it in your work.

[20 : 20] Think about it in Hong Kong. Think about it as you walk through the day. I'm told that every day six billion U.S. dollars is spent in advertising. Six billion.

And that every day you and I walk through the streets of Hong Kong, we're exposed to 3,000 different types of advertisement. Telling us we need something, that we should buy something. Our life would be more happy if we had this.

And we're incomplete if we don't have this. 3,000. Over and over, our society says to us, hey, you need these things. And greed is something that pushes it out there. And it's interesting because we, again, we don't see it in our life.

Because we compare it to other people. Princeton professor Robert Wuthno in his book, God and Mammon, which is a very interesting book. It's called God and Mammon in America. And he says that Christians have just as much problem or probably more blind to coveting and greed than people who have no faith.

He says they can see it in others, but they don't see it in themselves. They don't see their struggle with it, but they see others. And when they are caught in it, they welcome the punishment. It motivates us to earn more than we need.

[21 : 26] To earn more than we can use. To ache for stuff that never satisfies us. To telling ourselves that this stuff will deliver much more than it can. And that it will make us happy.

Like a happy meal. Happy, happy, happy. And he says that we all have these problems. And the Bible says that we have these problems. And the Bible says that when coveting and greed enters into our life, it destroys relationships.

It destroys our relationship with God. And it destroys our relationship with each other. Maybe a question you should ask next time you're tempted to buy something or to do something or act a certain way.

Ask the question, is this going to bring me closer to the Lord? Is this going to make our relationship with God better? Is this going to make my relationship with my fellow workers better? Are they going to see me as a better person, a kinder person, a gentler person?

Is it going to help me in that way point people to Christ? Because the Bible says that coveting and greed and envy, these idols destroy relationships.

[22 : 34] And if you're honest, you've seen it happen in your world, right? You've seen it happen in families. We read about it every day in a newspaper in families in Hong Kong. You see it happen in work. You see it happen among partners.

You see it happen among spouses. In Genesis chapter 3, which we had read, this idea of coveting and greed begins with our eyes.

Verse 6, we see something that is good for food. It's a delight to the eyes. We see something that's going to make us happy.

We see something that's going to make us satisfied. We see something that's going to make us complete. It's something that we need. We start saying that this is what I need. This is going to meet all my needs.

And when we say that, this is what I need. This is what we're going to meet, all my needs. What we're saying on the flip side is that God doesn't. God isn't going to meet my needs.

[23 : 29] God isn't good. God isn't good enough. Or if he's good, I wonder why he's not being good to me. And so we see, you have that problem, don't you?

Okay, I love Diet Coke. But I love Krispy Kreme donuts. And when Krispy Kreme came to Hong Kong, I was like, oh, hallelujah. This is the greatest thing in the world, right?

But then I have a heart attack, and my wife's saying, you know, Krispy Kreme donuts is really bad for you. You shouldn't be eating Krispy Kreme donuts. I'm like, oh, oh, oh, oh. And so the Krispy Kreme donuts opens up in Causeway Bay in Times Square area, and we're walking by it.

And we just happen to walk by it as we're kind of going on a date night. And there's this cream. I go, whoa, look at that. There's a Krispy Kreme there. Who knew that that Krispy Kreme went there? I said, why don't we go in and look at it?

I won't buy anything. I promise. I'm not going to buy anything. I just want to go look at it, see what kind of donuts they have. I looked, right?

[24 : 30] I saw that it was good to make one wise and healthy. And my wife is sitting there going, come on. That's impossible.

Well, we walked in, and we looked around, and guess what? We walked out with two dozen donuts. It's the principle of covening and greed, right? It happens in our eyes, and we see it, and we say, this is going to make me happy, and I need this.

And it happens in stupid little ways like Krispy Kreme donuts, but it happens in other big ways in our lives, and we just don't realize that it's actually killing us. And it's hurting our relationships with God, and it's hurting our relationships with each other.

We start to challenge God's word. In verse 3, you see it. She starts to challenge his word, and is his word really true? Is God's word true or is it subjective? I mean, maybe I feel differently, so the word says this, but I don't feel like that.

Because if I do this, I'll be so happy. And I think that what God's saying here is probably outdated, and it's probably too restrictive, and it's probably can't take it too literally.

[25 : 35] It's old, and she does that. She says God's word isn't true. How many times do we struggle with that? How many times do you talk to people in your world, and they talk about things, and they say, yeah, I would go to church, but those rules seem a little restrictive to me.

And you go, yeah, but they're there for a reason. They're there to help us because God wants a relationship with us. And if I break the rule, am I really closer to God, or do I feel guilty and shamed? And so she starts to wonder if God is good and if the rules are true.

And then the next thing you see in verses 1 through 5, again, is she wonders if God's character is true. I mean, is God really good? I mean, if you're like me and you struggle with coveting and greed, you realize that God is powerful.

He's all powerful. But you start to wonder if he's really good. Because if he is good, he would give me these things, or he would allow these things to happen in my life.

And you see it in her life. She starts to wonder if God is really good. And he's all powerful, but he's not really personal. And sin and greed come in there, and they start to help us think of negative

things.

[26 : 47] Well, this didn't happen, and God didn't do this, and this didn't happen. I've been waiting for 20 years for this to happen, and these things didn't happen the way I thought they should. And we start getting discontentful.

And so she goes from seeing to desiring. And all these thoughts come in about God and his character and his word. And we're always questioning them every day. And every time we move towards greed and coveting in our life, we have to ask ourselves the question, Is God really good? Does he really care about me? And is this word true? Because if we don't, we're going to be discontent. Maybe at work, it works like this.

Your discontent comes out in your workplace. You're wondering why you haven't had a raise.

Maybe you feel like you have a better position, or you need a better position, or you need a better office, or you're not where you want to be.

Maybe there's some relationships you wish you could speak into. Maybe you wish you had a voice to speak into the things that are going into the company. And when you feel this discontent because you're not experiencing it, you start to drop seeds of doubt.

[27 : 56] I wonder if we're really doing what we should be doing. And is that person the right person for the job? And are they really that good? Are we really on tact? Are we on a mission? Maybe discontent has played out in our lives because we run after money.

We run after titles. Maybe we're showing our discontent because we're always looking for bigger and better things. And by the way, Apple's coming out with their new iPhone on Tuesday, which I think is going to be really cool.

But is that guilt? Is that shame? Is that pride? Is that greed in my life? The scripture says that as we go through our life, we have to ask ourselves the question, are we discontent?

Maybe we're looking for the next thing. And if we have this thought in our head that if I just do this next thing, or if I get this next bonus, or I get this next role, or if I get this next promotion, then that's going to fix it all. Maybe if I get this wife, it will fix it all.

Maybe if I get rid of my kids, it will fix it all. Maybe if I get rid of my kids, it will fix it all. We're always looking for the next thing. And the Bible says that this next thing is a sign that we have a heart problem.

[29 : 03] It's a sign that we've become greedy, and we're not thinking about what God has done for us. Maybe relationally, we're thinking the next relationship is what we need. The next hookup.

The next sexual encounter. The next time I go out onto the bars. The next time I do these things, then I'm going to find true love, and it's all going to work. The next thing. And the Bible is full of stories of people who are on the next things, and they're looking for the next things to bring them happiness instead of discontent.

But the passage says discontent, seeing, and wanting always fractures our relationships. It always breaks our relationships with God. It always breaks our relationships with others. And as you read the passage, what you see is you see this pattern.

You see the pattern is this. I see. I want. I desire. God is not good. His word isn't true. I take it. I see. I want.

I desire. I am discontent. I take it. And every time in Scripture after that taking is done, what you see is a broken thing happen. You see a broken relationship.

[30 : 08] You see a broken relationship with God. You see a broken relationship with each other. And we start to wonder, what do I do with this now? And when they heard God coming, what did they do?

They hid. They ran away. When David realized that Bathsheba was pregnant, what did he do? He purified her first and did a ceremony so that she was clean.

But then when she went back, she was pregnant. What did he do? He hid the truth. And he had her husband killed. When Achan in Jericho takes the stuff, he's not enjoying it, but he's hiding it.

Because it's broken his relationship with God. It's broken his relationship with the family. But we all hide things in our life. For some of it, it's pornography.

For some of it, it's stuff. For some of it, it's relationships. It could be a lot of different things. Truths and lies.

[31 : 10] As we go down that road to see, take, hold, hurt. What are you hiding today? What are you hiding?

Because the Bible says we all have this problem with greed. And we all have this problem with coveting. And that we're all hiding things in our life. And we're looking for ways to not show those. In every sermon, I've asked someone to come up and to share a little testimony of their work and how their work plays out in these ideas and thoughts. And so what I did today is I asked Celeste to come up.

And I wanted Celeste to come and just share. Everybody's always worried that I forgot the questions. I'm going to ask different questions. And, but Celeste has the questions.

And so, kind of. And so, Celeste, I just, as we're talking about this journey of work and what God's doing in our life, I just wanted you to come and just share just a little bit about yourself and people, they can know you.

[32 : 22] Hi. My name is Celeste. I'm usually on stage doing something else. But today I'm actually talking. I came to Christ when I was in the last year of high school. And, yeah, I've just been walking with the Lord ever since.

And I'm a solicitor. I work in commercial litigation. And I serve here at Watermark as a worship leader. For Americans, that means you're a lawyer, right? Yes, it means I'm a lawyer. An attorney. So I serve here at Watermark with the worship team, with the music team. And I serve in my marketplace as well. So as you've been serving in the marketplace, and we've been talking about business and how it interacts and how we as Christians should engage these things.

And today we're talking about just greed and coveting. I'm sure you've never seen that as a lawyer in any of the things that you do. But maybe you could just share. I mean, we're not doing a bashing thing.

But as you look at people in their world, what are some things that you've noticed? I think the things that people, that lawyers covet in our circle, it's the same.

[33 : 27] It's the same as the things that other people covet in their circles too. I think very obviously there's money. There's power. What I see all the time is recognition.

And I think that's a very big pitfall that most lawyers probably fall into. Popularity, reputation, things that are very self-glorifying.

So as you've seen those things played out, because we've known you for a long time and seen you probably at your highest highs and your lowest lows as a family. And I remember you sharing stories of some of those things being played out even within the firm.

Would you say what usually is the effect of those on relationships and things like that? I know I'm throwing you a curveball. I think it brings a lot of tension. Because it's easy to go into a workplace and just be very friendly with everybody and have good relationships.

But when things happen, you get power struggle. Even daily relationships, even seeing in trainees, they seem very friendly. But politically, they're all fighting to get retained.

[34 : 36] I think there's a lot of undercurrent that goes on in the workplace. And it brings a lot of tension between people. Even, say, for me as an associate, I see within my own working environment that associates are competing to get better work.

They're competing to get the higher profile work. They are competing perhaps to be more recognized, to have a better reputation amongst the team. And also, at least for us, feeling wanted, I think, is a big thing.

You know, having headhunters call you, having offers. Even though they're not going to go anywhere, it's the wanting to be recognized that you're good at what you do. I think that's something that's very real.

So, you know, the next question then is, in the middle of that wanting to be recognized and the struggle as an associate to move up, what do you feel like God's been teaching you as following Him on this journey?

What does that look like for you? I don't think that's a straightforward answer for that, for me personally, because I'm very challenged every day when I go into work as to what kind of lawyer am I going to be today.

[35 : 48] And I've kind of made it my mission statement from day one. When I interviewed for my job, I put God all over my application so that with the intention and the risk, with the intention that my interviewer had to ask me about my faith.

And I was very intentional about doing that, even though it might not get me the job, because I felt that there was a greater need to not just be kept accountable in my Christian circle, but also be kept

accountable by the people at work.

I think people, I needed to put it out there that I am Christian, and I told my interviewer that whoever I work for in the office is not going to be my boss.

And I told, well, he is now my partner. He employed me two years later, so I guess it went out well. And he is not a believer. And I set that bar very high for myself because I think it's important to keep our hearts in check.

And sometimes when you're in a workplace, when you're not surrounded by your brothers and sisters, you know, Jesus says that he's sending us his sheep among wolf packs. And it's important to be reminded that we live in a world where there are lots and lots of traps.

[36 : 55] And I wanted to be kept accountable, not just by my brothers and sisters, but also by my colleagues to remind me that, yeah, I have a mission to do things differently in this place.

So I commit every morning before I start working to spend time with the Lord in the office. I pray for the office. And when I joined my firm, I started a prayer group, just recognizing that I'm not alone and that there are other people in the workplace who need to be supported, who need to be kept accountable as well in their positions.

I think God places his people very strategically, even in different teams in a company, to be a light. And it's easy to get lost in work.

I think we all know what that means when, you know, living a busy life is that we can get lost in the busyness and we can get lost in feeling important that we have so much to do. But ultimately, you know, as lawyers, my job is to represent my clients, but ultimately if I commit to working for Jesus, then ultimately every day I'm representing Jesus as my biggest client.

And that's a commitment I take very seriously in my workplace. So not only am I kept accountable by other Christians in my firm, I feel like I need to be kept accountable by my colleagues and also amongst my community group.

[38 : 12] I think community support is very important. that when I'm stressed, I think my stress level is a pretty good indicator of where I am that particular week with Christ. Am I trusting the Lord?

Am I really giving it to him? Or am I taking everything into my own hands? And when I do that, when I stress over these things, how much joy am I radiating to the people around me?

And also, am I doing that for God? Or am I doing that for myself? And I think that's ultimately, that very simple question always brings me back to Jesus. I like, one of the things you just said there was, which I think is what I experienced in my life and in studies and every place I go, that usually everyone I talk to and even myself in a certain environment, we all feel alone.

And we feel like, okay, I'm the only Christian here. I'm the only person trying to, and in most cases, that's not true. And like you said, God brings people in strategic areas to support.

And the question is, are we as a body going to seek that support and be a part of that, right? I think that's a huge indicator of success and walking with him. Thank you so much.

[39 : 20] And I hope I didn't scare you too much. I want to pray for Celeste and for all the other solicitors. Is that right? Yes, correct. Okay. So, yeah, about two years ago, we started the church.

And we had this coffee machine. And so we're Americans, right? So we've never heard these terms. And so Christina's introducing and meeting a guy.

And she goes, so what do you do? He goes, I'm a barrister. And Christina goes, that's great. We're about to get this coffee machine. And we're trying to figure out what coffee machine should we really have.

So if you could help us with picking the right coffee machine and the right coffee, then that would be a huge help to the church. And he's like, I don't really drink coffee, but.

So we are learning new words too. So we don't use the words barrister, but I love you, honey. So Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your goodness.

[40 : 21] And we thank you for your mercy. We just thank you for your grace. Thank you for Celeste and how you've been with her and you continue to be with her and you promise that you will always be with her. You will always be with all of us. We just pray that she would see your hand upon her, that she would feel your mercy and grace even in the hard, difficult times, even when she makes mistakes.

And she would know that you're there and that you have a great plan for her life. And pray for all of us that we would not feel alone because your word says that we're with you and that we're not alone. And we pray these things in your son Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you. Thanks, Wes. The passage says that we take, we see, we take, and we covet, and it brings pain and brings hiding.

Wouldn't it be interesting if, as we're tempted or we're tempted to do something, we're tempted to be greedy, that all of a sudden we saw all the consequences of that before we did it?

I mean, what would Eve think if she knew you could take this apple but it's gonna break your relationship with God and, oh, by the way, your older son's gonna murder your younger son and for the next thousands and thousands of years, mankind will be in this turmoil and the earth is gonna be in trouble and there's gonna be tsunamis and earthquakes.

[41 : 37] What if she actually saw that before she had the opportunity to take that apple? Do you think she would have taken it? And the Bible says that you and I actually, we actually have that opportunity to see those things too.

And it's called God's Word. And as we come to God's Word, the thing to me that's amazing about this is it's a story about not perfect people, but it's a story about broken people who go on a journey with God and God continually redeems them and heals them.

Maybe the next time we are tempted to be greedy or to covet, we should ask questions like, is this gonna really draw me closer to the Lord? Is this really gonna help my marriage?

Is this really gonna help my mind? Is this really gonna help my work? Is this really gonna help my children? Or is this thing that I'm about to do going to break up everything?

We don't realize it sometimes because in the midst of it, it's hidden. And we think that it's the answer to all our problems.

[42 : 48] And the Scripture says that the answer to all of our problems is Jesus. And he's the only thing that's gonna give us wholeness. He's the only thing that's gonna make our life content.

He's the only thing that's gonna make our life happy. The Bible says that when we enter into these dark times, to restore it is pretty easy.

All we do is we come before the Lord and we confess what we've done. We bring our life to him because he's already seen it all. We confess the sin and the disobedience and even the words that we thought.

I thought if I did this, I was gonna bring me happiness. But I realize that only you bring true happiness. This is called confession. Scripture says after we confess that we just come to the realization and acknowledge that God is good and that we can trust him to be on the journey with us.

We can trust him to be God and to realize that all we really need in our relationships is God. And all we really need at work is Jesus. And all we really need in our family is that relationship with Jesus.

[43 : 59] And anything that breaks that relationship is gonna cause us to hide. One thing that I realized as I was studying this passage in my life is that you see, you covet, you take, you experience pain.

But in every one of these stories, in the darkness and in the hiding and in the running away and in the not wanting people to see it, in every one of these stories in Scripture, there's a fifth part.

And that fifth part is that God steps in and he pursues us. That God never leaves us alone in the darkness. That God never leaves us alone as we're running from him.

But the passage says that God, in the quiet of the garden, walked to them. He asked questions. He knew where they were. And he pursued them. The passage says that David was hiding in his castle and God sent a prophet to pursue him.

And the story goes over and over and over. And wherever you are, wherever you are on the journey, if you're hiding, if you're struggling, what we want you to leave here with is all about a relationship with Christ.

[45 : 15] And that God is good. God, he's planned your life out from the very beginning and you can trust him even in the most difficult times.

Father, we just thank you for this day. As we look at these stories of Eve and Adam and we wonder if they had known what was going to happen to their relationships and what was going to happen to us and thousands and thousands of years later we're looking at them as a story of what not to do and I wonder in our lives if a generation from now people will be doing the same for us.

Will our children look at our lives and wonder if it's something that they should emulate and copy or if it's a disaster and they need to run away from it? Well, I pray for those of us in here right now who don't have a relationship with you.

The scripture says that they are blinded to their blindness and the only way that their eyes can be opened is by you opening them and showing your son Jesus. I pray for my brothers and sisters here who are in that place right now that they would realize that all the things they are grabbing for to give meaning and hope and success and comfort in their life, all these things, all these idols will enslave them and they will be slaves to those things and they are terrible, terrible masters. So I pray for those here in that situation where that you would open their eyes. I pray that as they realize that you're pursuing them by the very fact that they're here, you're pursuing them. [46 : 54] I pray that they would just come to you this moment and just ask you to be real to them. That they would confess whatever that thing is that they're holding on to and clinging to for hope and meaning and purpose, the thing that they can't give up, they're afraid to give up and they'd realize that you are good, that you're all powerful and that you're personal and you desire to be with them.

Father, I pray for those of us who have entered into that journey with you in the family and we're walking right now as if we're in a jungle or in a dark, dark place because we've allowed our hearts to become captive through certain things, certain things that promised us success and happiness and wholeness and wealth and comfort and health, certain things that have promised us all those things that are good desires because you made us to have those desires and we've grasped onto these things only to realize that we've grasped onto death.

brokenness, something that will destroy our family and our relationships and in our work and in our life if it's found out and so we hide.

Lord, I pray for those of us who are hiding that we'd realize that you're right there and you're pursuing and you know everything and that you would give us the strength just to confess and to come before you to be so thankful for your son, Jesus, who is all that we really need and that we'd realize that your grace and your mercy have healed us and you've forgiven us.

Lord, I pray for those in this area right now where you've placed this church on the western side of the island. We pray for those in our work and in our homes and in the restaurants we're going to run into today who don't know you and they're grabbing for things for purpose and meaning.

[49 : 00] Lord, I pray, I think the greatest challenge for us as your children is just to realize that we need to stop focusing on ourselves for one second and focus on the people around us and to serve them and for most of us it means just sharing our life with them, sharing with them maybe in just in a little beginning way the truth of your son, Jesus.

I'm praying for them. So we pray for this western part of Hong Kong Island that there would be many other churches planted as we walk with you faithfully and trust you for these great things. We pray for the offering that we're about to give you. We just know that whatever it is, it's to you, it's to your glory. We pray that you would use it to these outreaches and to these ministries and to these worship events and to all these things that are a part of being a family.

We pray for these outreaches this week that are happening everywhere that you would be there and people would see how great your love is for us as we sang today and how good you are. Help us not to be discouraged. Help us not to feel heavy. Help us not to feel guilty or ashamed because you don't see it that way in our life but help us to feel the peace and the truth of your mercy and grace because they are real and they are true and they never change.

[50 : 26] So Father, we thank you for this time. We love you. We pray all these things in your son, Jesus' name. Amen.