

How To Live Consistently

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 March 2013

Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 0 0] In the exercise of his will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be kind of a firstfruits among his creatures. This you know, my beloved brethren, but everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Therefore, putting all filthiness and all remains of wickedness aside, in humility, receive the word implanted, which is able to save your soul.

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For anyone who is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in the mirror.

For once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and our Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

[1 : 3 6] This is God's word. How you guys doing? Yeah. What an amazing worship. Thanks for bearing with us and jaunting all the way up here on the ninth floor.

Amidst all the craziness, we're just very thankful that God has given us a place to meet this week. If you were here last week, you learned some things.

You learned that my wife was not here, and so that my kids and I dressed themselves, and that I took a lot of flack for that by some of the more honest mothers in this group.

I was thankful that after the church service, some of the more empathetic ones came up and said, I think they look great. You did a great job. So thank you very much. I got some field in there also.

And it was interesting because we went home that night, and we called Christina. And oh, by the way, Christina's back, so you can look at our kids. They're dressed normal, and that's okay. But the first thing my youngest one said on the phone Sunday night was, you're not going to believe what Dad let us wear to church on Sunday.

[2 : 4 9] I was like, you tattletale. I'm not going to tell you anything anymore. So Christina's back, and it's good. And I have another confession to make. So the confession is this.

In our household, we have pretty strict rules about television because if we don't, our kids and us, we'll just watch it all the time. And so the kids aren't supposed to watch television during certain times during the week and even sometimes on the weekend.

And I want to confess, too, just bring it out here. So we're bringing everything out here in the open. Ladies, don't make your husbands the primary caregivers of your children, okay?

It just will not work. And like after four hours of Uno, something goes on in the male's brain, and it just kind of clicks, right?

And you kind of shut down, and you don't know what. And so, but I didn't let my kids watch TV, but I gave them an iPad. To which I said, hey, your dad needs to go do some reading in the bedroom, which means sleeping.

[4 : 00] And you can watch this iPad, but don't tell your mom right away, okay? We can tell her later on. And so I went back to do some reading in the bedroom. And after about an hour, the silence woke me up, and I wondered what was going on.

Because the silence in the house isn't with four kids. That's just not good either, right? Like they're burning down something, or someone's bound and taped, and they're stuck to the wall, or you don't know what's going to happen.

So I went around looking for them, and I found KK, our youngest six-year-old, with her iPad there, and she was watching. She was watching Disney, Charles. You'll be very happy. She's worked for Disney.

And she was watching that movie, you know, and I hadn't seen it in a long time, so I sat down and I watched it too. And, you know, it's the one where the ugly witch, and she has the mirror, right? And she goes to the mirror, and she says?

Mirror, mirror. Well, she actually says magic mirror, I think, is the actual correct words. But, and I thought that was kind of interesting. So I watched it, and she said it again.

[5 : 03] And I was like, wow, that's good theology. In Texas language, what she probably would have said was, how you doing?

Or how am I doing? To which she was hoping the mirror would say, you're doing really good. And she did really good until you know who came on the scene, right?

And when you know who came on the scene, Snow White, she no longer got that affirmation from the mirror. And so the whole story is about her trying to get the mirror to say, you're doing good. No matter what that takes.

And I thought about that as we think about going into this book for the next couple weeks. And I think, you know, that is a lot like our lives.

I think a lot of us have mirrors in our lives. And these mirrors we come to every day, every morning, more than once a day.

[6 : 04] And we ask the question of ourselves, how am I doing? I don't know what the mirrors are in your life.

I don't know what the mirrors are that you come to and that you ask, what is really real? What's the reality check in my life?

What do I get? How do I understand? How do I find out if I'm doing good? If you're a single, maybe you're judging if you're doing good by your friends. Maybe you're looking around at the friends in your office and the place they're coming in there.

And I think we judge and we compare by what we don't have and what we do have. What we haven't done and what we have done. And maybe as a single, you're looking at your peers and you're looking at their lives. And you're looking at the things that they've accumulated.

You're looking at their wealth. You're looking at their titles. You're looking at the relationships they've had. And you're comparing them to that mirror. You're looking at the mirror of their life. And you're asking yourself, well, how am I doing?

[7 : 06] When you compare it to them. Do I have the same stuff? Do I have the same relationships? Am I engaged? What's happening in my life? How am I doing? I grew up with a guy.

And he's still a very good friend of mine. And his mirror was sexual relationships. And this guy realized that he was going to do good in life if he had a new partner every day.

And I knew him through high school. And I knew him through college. And I knew him as a single guy. And, you know, sometimes we would talk and he would talk about his exploits.

And I just was in... And I looked in that mirror and compared my life. I'm a college student. I've never had sex. I'm a loser.

I'm 24. I've never had a relationship intimately. I'm a loser. I'm 30. And I'm still choosing to walk with the Lord and choose what he said is true, even though it's so incredibly difficult and hard.

[8 : 12] I'm a loser. I'm 34. And when I look at myself in the mirror of my friend, my life didn't measure up.

After we got married, he came and we were talking. And, again, he just talks about his exploits and all these things. And it might not be sex for your friends. It might be money.

It might be house. It might be power. It might be people that he can control. But he looked at me and he started talking about all these people.

And finally I said, okay, come on. Now tell me, how often are you really having sex? And he shared it. And I'm like, well, I'm a married guy and I have sex just as much as you do. But the difference is I have it with one person in a relationship that God has ordained.

If you're a married person here today, what's the mirror you're looking into? What's the thing that you're comparing yourself to?

[9 : 20] What's the thing that you judge yourself by when you look at that mirror in your friends' lives or other married people's lives? What is it that says you're doing pretty good? Is it that you have three houses now and you can now rent out?

That's what I've always been told. That's what we've got to do in Hong Kong. We've got to have three apartments and you rent out two and you live in one and you're set. I'm doing good. Is it that? Is it your spouse?

Is the mirror, oh, we've been married 15 years. We have to be doing good. Or we've been married 40 years. That has to be something. Is it where your kids go to school?

Is it your kids got into that school? Is it your kids graduated from this university? See, what is it, the mirror, that you compare your lives with every day and you look at it and you go, you know, I'm not doing that bad.

I'm doing pretty good. When I look at things, I'm pretty happy. I don't know what your mirror is. I think we all have mirrors. I think some of us have more than one mirror in our lives.

[10 : 33] And I think that if we're honest, when we look at these mirrors, often we become very depressed. We look at the mirror in our life and we're like Thoreau when he says that most men live lives of quiet desperation.

I think that most of us are spending time trying to get the mirror to say what we want it to say. And some of us have been very good at angling the mirror so that it looks just a certain way so that it says you're doing okay. But I think for most of us, our lives, when we look into the mirror, we're not doing too good.

The scripture that we talked about last week in Luke 17 when Jesus came and he said, this is what it looks like to be a follower of Christ. Remember what he said?

He said, it means take short accounts of sin. That don't allow yourself to become a scandal. He said, hey, don't make sure that when you see sin that you rebuke it.

Hey, make sure that when you've rebuked it that you're quick to forgive each other. Make sure that when you walk with the Lord that you use the faith that God has given you. That's what he's given you. That's the faith. Use that because that's enough.

[11 : 41] Even if it's a little, it's enough because it changed you. And then a lot of our questions and a lot of our problems are we just don't use the faith that God's given us. We beg for more faith.

We try to get more faith. And then we finally told that the ultimate end of that was that we are called to serve. We're called to serve each other. And so the Luke says and Jesus says, this is what it looks like to be my disciple.

What I want to do, what we want to do is for the next couple weeks, we want to take a snapshot of that and we want to project it 15 years. Because in 15 years when Jesus is dead and he goes to heaven, a church is born in Jerusalem.

And this church is struggling with comparing itself and looking at how are we doing? What's going on in our lives? How are we doing? And that is the book of James.

The book of James for me is one of my most exciting and favorite books. It's the book that I grew up with as a young Christian. James and Romans were the books that shaped my life and the guys that disciplined me.

[12 : 40] And the thing about James is he's hard. I mean, he's simple. He's raw. He's straightforward.

You don't ever read James and go, what does that really mean? Because he just tells you that's what it really means. And often when you read James, you walk away and you, it kicks your butt.

Can I say butt in church? Your pigu. Or however you want to say it. It's just hard, right? And so what we want to do is I want to look at James today really briefly and get us thinking about this as a family of God.

What are the mirrors we look into? What are the reflections we expect? And what does that look like? And what James is going to say is he's going to say this. He says the only mirror that you can look into is God's Word.

The only mirror that we can find a true reflection of ourself is God's mirror, is God's Word. In Jesus' day, a mirror was made out of metal and tin.

[13 : 45] And no matter what the metal and object looked like, whenever you looked at it, there was a distortion. And James is saying you are going to be distorted if you look at any other mirror but the Word of God.

And so what I want to do in this really brief time, in this passage, is I want to look at three things, hopefully that maybe two things, maybe one thing, because we only got a couple more minutes left because he started so late.

But I want to look at some things that God says, if you are my child, if you walk with me. James' main premise is this. If you say you're a Christian, how come you live like you're not?

Or another way James says is, as you look into the mirror of God's Word, what should a Christian look like? And James says as we look into God's Word, we are going to change.

We are going to look different in three things. We're going to look different in our view of God's Word. We're going to look different in our view of ourselves. And we're going to look different in the view of other people.

[14 : 47] So the first thing I want to just really fly through, and we want to look at, this is what it looks like to look different in the view of God's Word. If you turn to your bulletin and look at verse 21, James says this.

Therefore, and so what is it therefore? You're looking to the front. What is he talking about? Putting aside all filthiness. The Greek is take off your dirty clothes. Take off the filth. Take off the things that have clung to you.

Take off the mud cloths that hang on to you. And all that remains of wickedness, anything else that's left in you, take it off. Throw it off in meekness. Receive God's Word, the Word of truth, the gospel, the message of what God has written to us.

Receive that Word implanted. And that Word implanted is very interesting. It doesn't mean that you earned it. It doesn't mean that you studied really hard to get it. It means that God stuck it in your life.

And so when you came to faith, God stuck this kernel of His Word in your life. And He says, receive that Word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

[15 : 59] In Greek, the word actually means it's able to save your life. It's able to help your life. It's able to direct your life. It's able to change your life.

And so the question we have to ask ourselves when we look into the mirror of God's Word, what do we think about God's Word? I need to tell you that I think today, more than ever, Christians are ignorant of the Word of God.

And it's amazing. I almost wanted to start the time off with a test, but I didn't want to embarrass myself. I didn't want to embarrass anybody else. But we have the Bible all around us. It's on our iPods. It's on the Internet. It's everywhere.

It's in an abundance, more so than any time in history. But the people of God don't know the Word of God. How do you handle God's Word?

What does it look like in your life? In 1989, I was in mainland China. I was a teacher. And the first person I saw the Lord bring to Christ, his name was Tex.

[17 : 07] He's a good friend of mine. He was graduating. He was graduating. He had just come to Christ from my class and my friendship and teaching. And he's about to go back to his hometown because in those days, you had to go back to your hometown where you came from.

He came to me and he said, I have two weeks. I have two weeks before I have to leave. Will you teach me God's Word? Now, Tex was, he graduated, so he's off of campus.

He was an hour away. I said, for two weeks, I'll teach you the Word of God. Come to my dorm room every night at 6 o'clock. We'll have been 6 to 10 o'clock teaching. And at the end of the time, I'll just do a total brain dump and I'll teach you everything I know.

Everything I know you'll know. Let's do it. And for two weeks, Tex came. And I had a couple Bibles with me, Chinese Bibles. But I didn't want to give it to him yet because I didn't know if he was sincere.

I didn't know if the Word, the seed was really in there. I didn't know if God had really implanted it or was it something cool because the Western told him about it. And so every night, Tex came and we started with him just copying my Bible.

[18 : 08] So for an hour, he hand copied my Bible, every word, and we started in the Gospels. And he just wrote down every word and he'd finish it up after about an hour and we would discuss what he wrote.

And he did that for two weeks. Every night, an hour there, three hours writing, four hours talking, go back home an hour.

At the end of two weeks, Tex was going to leave. And I brought him out this Bible and I gave it to him in Mandarin and English. And he looked at it and he goes, this is precious, isn't it?

I said, yeah. It's the Word of God for you. How do you view God's Word? What do you look like when you think of God's Word in the mirror of your life?

I know growing up, for me, the Bible was just a big book that was stuck in my bookshelf with my parents. And I would take it down sometimes because it had really good pictures. But it didn't really mean anything to me.

[19 : 19] It didn't really speak to me. There are a lot of books I've read over and over and over again. One of my favorite books is the Tolkien trilogy. I know I'm a nerd.

I've read The Hobbit over and over, maybe five or ten times. But every time I read it, it's the same. It's the same story. It doesn't emote me. It doesn't change me. It doesn't move me. It doesn't speak to me.

We went home this summer and we went to Christina's parents' lake house. And we were in the storage rooms. And we had these boxes. And we had to get rid of these storages because our parents were transitioning in life. And we didn't know what we were going to do.

And she opened up this box and it was all my journals in it. So I would journal. When I became a Christian, I just journaled. And as a single person, I was journaling about the mirrors I was looking into.

And I had all these. And she goes, what do you want to do with these journals? And I started reading to them because I wrote them hoping that they would give insight in my journey. They would enlighten me one day when I read them after 20 or 30 years.

[20 : 16] And God would show me how he brought me along, the things that I was doing. And I started to read them. And I was like, what was I thinking? Love.

Lost love. Bad relationships. Hardship. And I read and read and read some of my journals. And it didn't relate to me at all.

It didn't change me. It didn't impact me. It didn't mean anything to me. Christina says, well, what do you want to do with them? And I'm like, I kind of want to throw them away.

And I want to shred them before I throw them away. So no one sees how messed up I was as a young person. So I kept one just as a souvenir.

Then I burned the rest. But you know, God's word isn't like that, is it? When you come to God's word and you read it, and you read it over and over and over again, that kernel starts to grow.

[21 : 21] And you can read James, and I've read it now for 20 and 30 years, over and over. And every time that I come to God's word, it speaks to me differently. It changes me. So the question for us, how do we handle the word of God?

What does that look like in our life? Does it change you? Does it move you? James says that if you're in the family of God, if that kernel of truth has been put into your life, that God's word should be precious and something amazing.

And he's saying, if it's not, if it's not precious, if it's not amazing, if it doesn't speak to you, if it's not changing you outwardly, if it's not giving you life, then you have to ask yourself the question, are you in the family?

Do you know the Lord? Is the kernel put there? James goes on in verse 18, and he says this, in the exercise of his will, God, he brought us forth.

In Greek, the word actually means that God birthed us. That God gave birth to us. How? By the word of his truth, by the gospel, by the whole measure of God's word.

[22 : 44] He gave his word to us so that we would be a kind of first fruits among his creation. James says if you look into the mirror of God's word, you're going to see yourself differently.

That word first fruits is really important. It's very, very important. Everyone in Hebrew culture would have known it. It would have meant the best. It would have meant the first. It would have meant the most prime piece of everything that you give, that you give that to your Lord.

It is an act of worship. It was the highest quality. It was set aside for God and God alone. It wasn't just your paycheck or your harvest or your first son that you gave to him as an act of worship that you set aside.

But here what he's saying is what? What James says is if you come into the family of God and you understand what happens to you, that God has asked you to give your whole life to him.

The passage is going to say later on, basically, if you're a follower of Christ, you can't live your life the way you want to. If you're a follower of Christ, you cannot live the way you want to.

[24 : 01] You can't live your marriage the way you want to. You can't live your business the way you want to. You can't live your relationships the way you want to. What James is telling us and what we have to look at and we have to evaluate in our lives is that when we come to know the Lord, our lives are not His.

They're first fruits that we lay down to God because He has made us born again. He has changed us and His Word abides in us.

And that Word changes us. We see ourselves differently. Let me ask you a question.

How do you see yourself today? I mean, how do you make choices in your world, in your marriage or in your life or in your business when you have to make choices?

All the mirrors around us are going to say, do whatever you want. Do whatever feels good.

[25 : 13] Do whatever is practical. And the mirror of God's Word says, do what honors the Lord.

Because your life is not your own. What do you think about the Word of God?

When you come to it and you're trying to find out what you should do in your life and you're trying to make decisions, how do you handle God's Word? Do you look at it and you say, you know, I like some of it, but I really hate the rest of it.

Do you look at it and say, well, I think the New Testament is pretty true, but the Old Testament is, that's fiction. It's false. Do you look at it and you say, some of it is very helpful for me, but some of it I don't understand or some of it I just don't want to deal with.

Jesus said all of God's Word is inspired in itself, God. James is saying all of God's Word is instructive to teach us where we should go.

[26 : 35] What do you think about that? Is that true? I mean, God seems kind of narrow, doesn't he?

I mean, there's a lot of things I want to do and it would be really fun to do those things. And he's saying, don't do that. Isn't that kind of pessimistic? I mean, he's put a lot of boundaries around my life and he's really hemmed me in.

I don't really have the freedom that I want to have in business or in my relationships. I don't like those passages that talk about purity and holiness. Because sometimes I just need to do what I need to do.

You ever said that? I have. Sometimes I say it more often than I want to say. Back to the lake house.

We go to the lake house every summer and we want to ride the boat. Her dad, Christina's dad, has a boat. And it's very interesting because to start the boat, there's a checklist of 50 things. I mean, literally, there's 50 things.

[27 : 43] You have to check the oil. You've got to take the tarp off. You've got to oil it on the seats. You've got to check the oil pressure. You've got to put the gas in. You've got to check the fluid pressure. And you have to do like 50 things before you start that boat.

And I get in there and I'm like, sometimes I just hate getting in the boat because of all the rules I've got to do. But then all of a sudden I realized the day I forgot to check the oil. And the engine starts smoking.

There's a reason for that checklist. I think as God's people, sometimes we forget that.

And we feel like God is archaic. He's trying to hem us in. It's not going to work out. It's not convenient for me. But there's something there he wants to teach us and to protect us and to guard us.

And James is saying, if you compare yourself to the mirror of God's word, your life is going to look different. It's not yours.

[28 : 51] It's been given to the Lord as a first fruit. And so now the question we have to ask ourselves is, what does God want me to do here? How am I to honor him in this relationship?

How am I to honor him in this business venture? How am I to honor him raising my children? How am I to honor him in this relationship? How am I to honor him in this relationship? The world and everything around us are going to put up a lot of mirrors.

And they're going to give us images of what things look like and how we should do. But James says, no. Be careful.

Because as the people of God, we're different. We see God differently. We see his word differently. We see ourselves differently.

At the end of the passage, we see other people differently. We're called to go out. We're called to take care of. The word there in Greek is very interesting.

[30 : 00] It's this word that basically says to visit, but it doesn't mean to visit. It means to advocate for. It means to come alongside. It means to take care of. It means to develop a relationship with.

And James really clearly says this. If you say you're in the family of God, then these are the things that are important to the family of God.

And these are the things that I want you to do. Visit widows. Care for orphans. Take care of people who cannot take care of themselves.

The history of the church. The history of the church. That's why the church grew. It's why it took over the Roman Empire. The Christians were always out there doing those things.

While the rest of the world was looking at a mirror. It just reflected their image. How are we doing? I'm going to end here.

[31 : 05] But I want to share one final thought. Bear with me. When I come to the scriptures, sometimes it overwhelms me.

When I come to God's word, sometimes it crushes me. Because I walk away thinking, I got to do this.

I got to do this. I got to be this. I got to do these things. Okay, Tobin just gave me a list of other things I got to do. I got to do this. I got to be kind. I got to be gentle. I got to change my words. I got to take off my dirty clothes. I got to watch Snow White.

I got to do all these things. What am I going to do? There's too many things to do. And it's really interesting because the final thought that I want to give you is found in verse 25. James says this.

As I blow my nose. But the one who looks intently, that word in Greek is only used twice.

[32 : 08] It's the same word that was used when Peter came to the tomb. And he looked into it and Jesus wasn't there. It's not just to look or to glance, but it's to ponder, to think about, to consider, to wonder, what does this mean?

What does it mean that he's risen from the grave? What does it mean that God's word is all these things? But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, that he holds it, he does it perfectly, not having become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual, the word in Greek actually is, he's perfect.

He hears everything. He obeys everything. This man will be blessed in what he does. When I come to God's word, the thing I'm always reminded of is where's Jesus?

Where's Jesus? The one, it's a very special phrase, it's not talking about you and me. It's talking about Christ.

The only way that we can be the type of people that God has called us to be is if we understand that we have the one, Jesus, who's lived the perfect life.

[33 : 41] He's done everything righteously. He's obeyed. He's heard. He's done it all. He's done everything. He never sinned. He came here. He did everything perfectly. He's the one who holds it perfectly and righteously.

And Romans says that he came and he did all those things and that he became a sacrifice for you and me so that we might receive his blessing in the inheritance.

If you come to God's word and you walk away with a list of do's and don'ts, it will kill you. And after about three months or six months or a year or five years, you're going to be so frustrated you're going to give up because you cannot do it.

It's impossible. Impossible. And what James is saying is you're right. You cannot do these things.

But you have a Savior who did them. He did them all perfectly. And the question is are we going to accept that?

[34 : 54] Are we going to accept his sacrifice? Are we going to accept his blood poured out for us? Are we going to accept the image that he reflects in the mirror so that when God looks at the mirror of our life, he doesn't see us but he sees Jesus?

Or are we going to try to produce our own mirror and own image? And James says the only way this works, the only way we can be the people of God, the only way that we can walk with him, the only way that we can allow that kernel to grow, the only way that can be nice to people, the only way that we can control our speech, the only way that we can guard our heart.

I mean we have to do these things but before we do these things, before we make a choice, before we trust in them, we have to know the one who did it already. who took the place for us.

And as we take his sacrifice, the passage says that we're given freedom. And now I walk with the Lord, I talk in a way that honors him, not to earn my salvation, not to earn kudos, not to help that he'll think, oh you owe me for this, but I walk with the Lord, I do these things, often very imperfectly, he's continually changing me as that seed grows, but I do it as an act of worship because he's already given me salvation.

He's already given me the gospel. He's already given me eternity. Those things allow us to walk with him.

[36 : 27] How are we doing? What mirror are you putting up to your life today? My prayer is that it would be just one mirror, the mirror of God's word, and no matter how hard that is, realize that you have a Savior who completed it all.

All we're called to do now is to trust him, to surrender our lives to him, and allow him to live through us. Let's pray.

Father, we just thank you for this day. We thank you for James that comes in and is so, so hard. We thank you for James that comes in and he's trying to shepherd this church that's falling apart in Jerusalem, that people are fighting, that people are arguing, that people are being selfish, that people are having bad business deals.

And he doesn't address every one of those. He just says, guys, if you say your followers are Christ, why aren't you acting like it?

I know there's some people in here who have no idea what I'm talking about. And they come to word, the word of God, and it's just like reading The Hobbit still.

[37 : 52] And we're so glad you're here because many of us were just in that same place not too long ago. My prayer for you is that you would just say a quick, simple thought to the God, the Lord.

You would just say, Lord, if you are real and if you are true, would you show me yourself? Would you show me your realness? Then I would encourage you just to talk to the people who brought you and ask them, what does it mean for them to be born again and to have Christ in them?

And Lord, for the rest of us, Father, I just ask your forgiveness for myself. So often as a pastor, I look into the mirrors of other things.

The world says these are important. And in doing that, I miss the most essential of what it means to walk with you, to love justice and to do kindness.

To search out for orphans and widows and those who can't take care of themselves. To keep oneself unstained by the world. And Lord, I just confess that I have a lot of stains on myself.

[39 : 15] So Lord, we come before you and we just ask you to heal us and to change us and to wash us. Help us to look at your mirror, your word. Help us to read it today.

For many of us, we just need to start reading it for five minutes a day and your promise is that kernel that's in our life will grow and change and will be different. Not because of our efforts, but because of your son.

So Lord, we pray as a church that we would be a church that loves you, that we find your son in every verse and we realize that if we don't do that, we're lost because we just become people who try to work harder to do more to make you happy.

And that's never going to work. The only thing that can make you happy is your son Jesus. So Lord, help us to find him in our lives today. We need you desperately.

We pray these things in your son Jesus' name. Amen.