

# Handling and Preaching God's Word

*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: 15 November 2015

Preacher: Tobin Miller

- [ 0 : 00 ]     Okay, if you have been with us for five years, or this is the first Sunday you've ever stepped foot in Watermark Community Church, what we hope we've been saying, what we've been trying to say, what we hope you've been hearing from us as we've been up here preaching and teaching, is that we are all on a journey.
- That we're all on this spiritual journey. And we hope that sometime within this journey that you're on, that you hear God's word. We hope that you hear the good news.
- We hope that you hear the gospel. We hope that you come to this overwhelmingly realization that there's a holy God who is passionately and aggressively pursuing you.
- The Bible says that God never stops pursuing his people. We hope that you see God's holiness. But more importantly, and just as important, we hope that you see your own brokenness.
- We hope that you see your need for a Savior. We hope that you see that you're self-centered. We hope that you see that you're selfish. We hope that you see that you're a sinner.
- [ 1 : 15 ]     We hope that you see that no matter how much you try to do, that you are light years away from a holy God. And we want you to hear this over and over and over again from God's word.
- That the only hope for us is Jesus. That 100% man, 100% God, perfect in all righteousness, who was crucified for you.
- A just man, a righteous man, was killed so that you could have life. And as you've been listening, our prayer and our hope for you is that you would understand that only Christ makes a way for us to come back to God the Father.
- We can try and we can do, but all of these things fall short from God's holiness. And the only way that we can come back to God the Father is if we accept this gift, this payment, his blood, his life.
- Our prayer is that you would just confess and that you would repent of your sins and your attempts to be righteous in your own works, in your self-righteousness. That you would just understand what the Bible talks about, about God's grace and how he brings his grace into our life.
- [ 2 : 26 ]     And through this grace, we call it passive righteousness. It's a passive righteousness. You and I are passively made righteous because we don't do anything. Christ does everything for us.
- All we just do is we receive it as a gift by faith. And our prayer is that you would understand this and it would be a part of your heart. It would be a part of who we are as a church.
- We'd always speak these words. The Bible says that as we do this, as we go on this journey, that you and I as Christians now, we are always going to struggle with this idea of passive righteousness.

Because there's just a sin nature inside of us. And this sin nature inside of us wants to work and it wants to do and it wants to earn our own righteousness. The Bible calls that works righteousness.

And so we're going to struggle with this passive righteousness because we want to be able to say, I do. I teach. I've earned. I worked my way up. This is who I am.

[ 3 : 26 ] The Bible says that you and I, we're going to struggle. We're going to try to minimize our sinfulness. We're going to try to struggle and we're going to minimize our selfishness. We're going to pretend. We're going to wear a mask. We're going to try to cover up our hearts.

We're going to tell people, yeah, we're doing okay. But the Bible says that we're not. The Bible is going to tell us that the key to growing in this Christian faith, to continuing on this journey, is the same key that we used when we came to faith.

It's the same idea that our conversion is brought about by God's word spoken to us. The gospel. And as we go on this journey, as we grow as God's people, how we handle God's word, how we talk about God's word, how we read God's word, how we meditate on God's word, how we do this in our everyday life, this will change us.

It's going to heal us. It's going to renew us. It's going to restore us. And if we handle God's word well, we're going to see a freshness and a newness and a change in our life.

But if we handle God's word poorly, if God's word is just a decoration in our house because it looks really cool and it's a nice book and we don't want to move it except for when we have to dust it.

[ 4 : 42 ] If we handle it poorly, if we handle it infrequently, if we don't even read God's word, then the Bible says that our hearts and that our lives and our passions and everything that we love is going to dry up.

It's going to become just like dry bones in the desert. Now at Watermark, we're going to say that we believe that the most important mark of a healthy church, because we've been talking about marks of a healthy church, that we believe that the most important mark of a healthy church is how we handle and teach God's word.

We're going to say that the most important mark of a healthy Christian is how you handle and hold God's word. We're going to say that God's word is powerful, that in Genesis God speaks and he creates and everything is in existence.

And we're told that through his word he holds everything together. And if we don't, if God just lost his attention or Jesus went to sleep, that everything would just implode and explode in a billion different directions because God's word says that he holds everything together.

We're going to say that God's word brings life and he does in the garden and it does in this passage. We're going to say that God's word has authority. God's word, we believe, has more authority than the chairman of the Fed.

[ 5 : 56 ] Now I know some of you find that hard to believe and some of us are listening for what the chairman of the Fed says more than what we're listening for what God says in our life. But the Bible has more authority than our presidents and of our advisors and of our chief executives.

And we're going to say that the Bible is relevant today. We're going to say it's not just for people 2,000 years ago, but it is God's instruction manual and guide and blueprint and guidepost and whatever you want to say, GPS for us today.

And it's relevant. And we're going to say, because we believe it's true, that God's word is true. Now often when I talk to people in Hong Kong, what they want to know, what Asian people want to know is does God's word work?

And we're very pragmatic in Hong Kong, right? We just want to know, does it work? And the problem is, is when something works, it works right now, but it might not work later. I mean, some of our relationships work right now, but they don't, might work 10 years down the road or 20 years down the road.

And so we don't want you to believe God's word is true because it works. We want you to believe that God's word is true because it's true. And if God's word is true, then it will work. It will work today, and it will work tomorrow, and it will work 20 years into your life.

[ 7 : 04 ] And it works when you're on your deathbed, and it works when you get fired, and it works when your spouse wants to divorce you. It works in all those situations because God's word is true. We're going to say that God's word has a central place, and all we do is God's people, and in it, God reveals himself.

And we're going to say that God, through his word, is the only means of bringing hope and meaning and purpose to our life. We've been talking for five years about how God's word comes in, and it shows us our selfishness, and it shows us God's holiness, and it shows us this struggle where we have this struggle to decrease the gospel and decrease the cross and make it little.

And God's word is going to remind us over and over of passive righteousness. Passive righteousness is a gift. I've given it to you. I've done it all. I'm bestowing it upon you. Don't try to work. Don't try to do it because if you try to work, if you try to do it on your own, you're going to mess up, and it's just going to fall apart.

And we believe that, in fact, the Bible is this story of God speaking to us. I mean, the main passage and message that weaves through the thread of all of Scripture is that God is speaking to you and me right now, that he's pursuing you.

He's passionately pursuing you. And then the big question of the Bible is this. Will we listen to him? Because the thread is he's pursuing us.

[ 8 : 29 ] He's talking to us. He wants to know us. He wants to have a relationship to us, with us. But the question is, are we going to respond to him? Are we going to obey? Are we going to not obey? And the Bible says that God sends his word over and over and over, and we have this choice.

And the choice is, are we going to follow God? Are we going to try to be God? That's the only two choices. God brings his word over and over and over, and we have a choice. Are we going to follow God?

Are we going to try to be God? And if we try to be God, we have to face the consequences of trying to be God in our world. And we see that all around us. And that's what the people in Ezekiel were struggling with. So when we come to this passage in Ezekiel, you realize that the people were struggling.

They've heard God. They've heard God. They've heard God. But they've struggled with obeying God. Just like you do. Just like I do. Every moment of our day, we struggle with this as we read here.

Now, here's some context here. Ezekiel was this young dude. I mean, he was like 30 years old when God called him. It was about 623 B.C. And if you were alive in 623 B.C., it was an awesome time to be a people of God.

[ 9 : 35 ] I mean, up until that point, the temple where people met to worship God, it was trashed out. It was all these idols came in. And if you went into the temple, there'd be money changers. There'd be a prostitute.

There'd be gambling. There'd be all these things there. It means like you come into church today, and there's a prostitute over here, and there's gambling over here, and you get your banking done over there, and you can do whatever you want over there. And that's what it was back then.

And then this young king comes up, this king Josiah. He's this young boy. And he has a heart and a passion for God. And so what he does is he goes into the temple, and he just cleans out all the temple. He destroys all the idols.

He cleans out all the temple. And as they're cleaning out the temple, there's this trash heap in the middle of the temple. And the guy is going down, and he's picking up this trash heap, and he picks it up, and he comes up with God's word.

It's their Bible. Well, no one had read it for years and years and years because no one even knew it existed. And he says, look what I found.

[ 10 : 34 ] And Josiah says, okay, let's read this. And so what he does is he just has people stand, and a priest come in, and he just reads God's word out loud. And as he's reading God's word out loud, there's just a revival that happens in people's hearts.

And people realize that God is holy and that they're not. And they realize how far they are from God. And they repent, and they basically ask God for forgiveness.

And there's this massive change. So this is where Ezekiel grew up. But about 20 or 30 years later, something big happens. And you can take that off, I think.

I don't know. What happens is these two new kingdoms come up, Egypt and Babylon. And the people of God are so excited because their lives are so prosperous.

They have everything they need. They have their 2.3 houses. They have their jobs. They have everything that we want in Hong Kong. And God looks at their heart, and he realizes that their hearts are far from God.

[ 11 : 35 ] And so he gets this little 30-year-old priest. He's nobody. He's nothing. And he goes to Ezekiel, and he says, I want you to go to the people of God. And I want you to tell them that on the outside, everything looks great.

It's perfect. They're living the perfect dream of Hong Kong. They're living a great, great life. But inside, they're dead. Their lives are dry.

Their lives are empty. Their lives are barren. They've been trying to work righteousness all their life. They've forgotten this idea of grace. And so instead of hoping in God, they've been hoping in the things that God has promised to give them.

And Ezekiel warns them that, he says, if your faith doesn't change, if you don't get rid of this works righteousness, and you understand this passive righteousness, this grace that God wants to give you, if you don't ask God to change your heart, then bad things are going to happen.

And if you read Ezekiel, you realize that the people don't listen. And then in chapter 24, they don't listen, and all of a sudden Babylon comes in and just wipes out God's people, crushes them.

[ 12 : 43 ] Everything they hoped in, everything they dreamed in, everything they put meaning in, everything that they had was taken away, and they were led into captivity. Now, remember, they're in captivity because God gave them everything.

God gave them a land. God gave them a nation. God gave them a strength. God gave them himself. God gave them his word. God gave them all these incredible things.

But God said to them, hey, I just want to warn you that if you lose sight of me, if you lose sight of the author of all of your life, of everything that's going on in your life, if you lose sight of the person who's given you all these things, then you're going to lose everything.

My covenant with you is going to be broken. You're going to be cut off. You're not going to have my law. You're not going to have me. You're going to be without hope. So basically, the penalty for disobedience in God's kingdom at that time and now is that people were cut off.

And they lost all those things. And so they're in this captivity. That happens in chapter 24. So up until chapter 24, God's been warning them. God's been warning them. God's been warning them. Destruction, bad things, be careful.

[ 13 : 58 ] Danger, Will Robinson, four shields up. Whatever culture and time frame you're in, whatever that warning is, you know, that's what's been going on. And the people have not listened to them. But then from chapter 14 on, 24 on, from when after the destruction's happened, what God, he changes his message.

Now his message is a message of reconciliation. Now his message is a message of pursuing his people. Now it's a message of forgiveness. Now there's this message of hope.

And remember the people have no hope. They're lost. They're captives. They're far from God. And God keeps telling them, I love you. I'm pursuing you.

I'm pursuing you. Just come back to me. Come back to me. Come back to me. And if you come back to me, everything's going to be okay. Does that make sense? So we get to Ezekiel 37 in your bulletin.

Verses 1 through 14. So Ezekiel's walking around, and all of a sudden it says, the hand of the God was upon me. And in Hebrew, it's the first time ever that this is said. And I don't understand if it's happened later on, but this is the first time.

[ 15 : 04 ] And it basically says God grabs him. So Ezekiel the prophet is walking through the town of Babylon. He's talking to people. God grabs him in his spirit, and he takes him out into this valley.

And this valley is just full of bones. If you read the book of Ezekiel in Ezekiel chapter 3, it's probably the same valley where he first meets God. And so Ezekiel's standing in this valley full of bones, and God asks him this question.

Now in Hebrew, the question only has one possible answer. The answer is no way. But God asks him this question, and Ezekiel knows God, and he knows that God can do anything.

And so Ezekiel says, I don't know, God, whatever you know. Because you can do it all. It's kind of like a test. In verse 4, God tells Ezekiel, okay, so I want you to start teaching.

I want you to start preaching. I want you to start talking to these bones. I want you to tell them of the things of God. I want you to tell them about how awesome God is. I want you to tell them about my character and my nature.

[ 16 : 10 ] I just want you to speak to these bones. Can you imagine this? So he's in this field full of dead bones, just dry and dead, right?

And he's just walking around, and probably no one's watching him except for God, but he's just going around, and he's just talking about, this is what God is like, and this is what God's called me to do, and this is what God wants for you. This is what God's promises are, and God wants to bring you back.

And he's just talking to these dead bones. It may be like if you drove by, and I'm in the cemetery in Poc Fulam. But what do you think if you saw Tobin walking around the cemetery with a Bible, and just, okay, this is what God's word said.

In the beginning was the word, and God loves you, and God sent his son. And you looked at him, and you go, okay, our pastor really needs a break, because he's going crazy, you know.

We need to figure out what's going on there. And so this is what's happening. I mean, Ezekiel's just told to talk about God, to preach God's word, because we've already said that God's word has power, and it changes, and it heals.

[ 17 : 10 ] And verse 5, it says that God causes his ruah, his breath, his spirit, his wind to come into the bones. And so you've got to picture this, guys, because it is so awesome.

I mean, it's better than any horror movie you've ever seen in your life. Have you ever been in a pile of bones? Now, 1989, before I was married, my wife wants to, let me tell you this, because I did really stupid things.

If I had to write a book, the title of the book would be Dumb Things I've Done. Okay, and so chapter 1 would be 1989, and so some friends and I, we were teaching in China, and we said, well, let's do something fun.

And so first we tried to get into North Korea. And the guy, you know, how did you get in here? Well, I spoke Chinese. Oh, really? And so what nationality are you? I'm an American. Okay, what do you want to do here?

Oh, we want to tour your country. And he's like, oh, okay. Perhaps, you know, in China, whenever they say perhaps, you know what's going on, right? Perhaps we will not have tourism in our country this year.

[ 18 : 08 ] So that was his way of saying you're not coming to North Korea. So instead, we went to Cambodia, and we went to Cambodia, and the Khmer Rouge were still there, and there was still guerrilla warfare, and people were being shot up. And we went up to Angkor Wat, and we got chased out into this land minefield, and we ran through this land minefield, chapter 2 of Dumb Things I've Ever Done.

And then we got down into Phnom Penh, and then we went out into the killing fields. And I just watched the movie, and at that time, the bones were still there. And it was overwhelming.

Because I was walking through a field, and there were just clothes, and teeth, and bones, and just heads, and skeletons. They were just building that kiosk that's there now.

It had like 30,000 skulls in it. But at that time, there was just bones everywhere. And so this is what Ezekiel's doing. And he's around all these bones, and he's just preaching, and he's teaching. And as he does it, what you see is God brings all these bones together.

And there's this massive noise in verse 7. It's actually what he says in this noise. It's the same word that's used in Revelations, and it's basically God's voice.

[ 19 : 11 ] It's his trumpet. So in the end times, when Jesus comes back, he's going to come, and he's just going to say something like, Wake up! And everybody who's ever passed away, and everybody who's ever died, is going to wake up.

And they're going to come to life. And so that's what happens here in this Ezekiel passage. He just speaks, and all of a sudden, there's this loud noise, and there's this rumbling in verse 7, and it's almost like this earthquake in Hebrew, and it's very intense.

I mean, the words don't do justice in English. You have to understand it in the real language. And bone is falling onto bone, and muscles are forming, and tendons are forming, and vessels are forming, and capillaries, and organs are forming, and all these things are happening.

And Ezekiel's just watching. And all that happened is because he spoke God's word. Just like in the beginning when God spoke and things were created, he just speaks God's word, and he just obeys what God calls him to do. And in verse 9, all of a sudden, there's just people standing there.

But they're not alive yet. And God says to Ezekiel, I want you to preach some more, and talk about me, and say my word. And so Ezekiel speaks, and as he speaks, God's spirit comes into the people when they come to life.

[ 20 : 28 ] It's just like creation. In the beginning, it says God took some mud, and he just kind of shaped it. Girls, you know why you have such a hard time understanding your men, because they're made out of mud, right? They're just dumb, right?

And so he just shaped this mud, and he builds this person there, and then all of a sudden, there's this person standing there, and he just goes, whoo. And his spirit goes into it, and it breathes it, and they come back to life.

And in verse 9 and 10, Ezekiel's just watching all of this, and he's in amazement, and he's just doing whatever God's called him to do. He's just following what God's told him to do. In verse 11, God tells us why.

He says, this is the spiritual condition of all the people, that we're all dry, we're all lost, we've all been cut off from these blessings because we've been disobedient, but God doesn't give up on them.

God doesn't give up on us. And so God is doing something awesome. He's reviving them. He's bringing them from life, from death to life. He's putting his spirit back into them. And the reason is, the number one reason God does anything is not for Tobin.

[ 21 : 37 ] The number one reason God does anything is for his glory because he's God, and he's great. Does that make sense?

There's three things I want us to see in this passage, three things I've been struggling with and thinking about in my life. There's three things in this passage I think that we need to understand as a church and God's people as we go forward.

And if we miss it, we're going to miss God's message for us. We're going to miss what it means to be a church in Hong Kong in 2015. And the first thing is this. There are dead bones everywhere.

It's probably the most graphic image in all the Old Testament. When you read it in the Hebrew, it's incredibly graphic, and it's incredibly gory.

And what God is trying to teach you and me, and what he wants to teach Watermark, is that's the condition of people without Christ. When God looks at people without Christ, they're spiritually dead.

[ 22 : 50 ] They're lost. You see, I don't think I understand that sometimes. I don't think we understand that. Because if we understood that, we would treat people differently.

If we understood that, we would do things differently. But what he's trying to teach us here is that people without God's Spirit within them, even though they're made in the image of God, even though God's fingerprint and watermark is upon them, because his Spirit is not in them, they're just dry and they're dead.

Now, I know I'm going to offend some of us here, because I offend myself when I think of this. But, you know, we think of people like, well, they're a really good friend. And they're a great parent.

And they're such a gentle grandparent. And they're a great colleague. And they're such a good teacher. And they're so kind and gentle. But what Scripture says is, outwardly, yes, that's what they look like.

But inwardly, they're just dead. They're just bones. And what it seems like is, before God can use Ezekiel, and before he can use Tobin, and before he can use Watermark, is that we have to understand that apart from God, everyone is dead bones.

[ 24 : 03 ] They're lost. And if we don't understand this, if we don't understand the spiritual condition of people around us, if we don't understand that the only hope is the good news, that Jesus pays for their sins, if we don't understand this, then we're going to always spend all of our time talking about philosophy, and self-help, and Oprah, and religion, and doctors, and psychiatrists.

And we're going to talk about all these things. But what the Bible says is, all these things cannot help dead people. We're going to say as a church that we believe God's word is true, because it's just like the sun.

We see it rise, but also as we see it rise, it shows and gives us understanding to everything in our world around us. And as a Christian, we have an understanding for why things are going on in Europe.

And we can explain what's happening in the hearts of people, and we can even give an answer to the solution of what's going on. Because we know that the problem isn't they haven't been educated well enough, or that they're too poor, or they're not fed.

We know that the problem, God's word says, is they don't know God. And so they're lost, and they're dead. And I think many of us need to ask God for some extra measure of grace in our lives today, and this week, as we look at our hearts, and as we look at the hearts of people around us.

[ 25 : 21 ] Because guys, I think that many of us are deceived. I think we use the words, we talk about it, but we're deceived.

We use words like good friend, and great person, and all these things, and yeah, God's going to give them a pass because they've done so many great things. But what God is trying to teach Ezekiel, and what he wants to teach you, and what he wants to teach me, is that we need to understand that everybody's dead.

And there's no hope. Even the greatest philosopher, even the greatest psychiatrist, even the great amount of food, even the greatest education, cannot bring dead people to life. The only thing that can bring dead people to life is Jesus.

And so I'm praying for us, guys. I'm praying for myself. I think we need to confess our pride. I think we need to confess our self-sufficiency. I think we need to confess our arrogance. Because I think there's a lot of us in here who thinks that we're doing really well healthily, spiritually, but we're probably not.

I mean, if we just looked at how often we spent time reading God's word and meditating through it, and that was the only indicator of our spiritual life, I would say probably a lot of us are hurting. I would say it sometimes or often I hurt.

[ 26 : 39 ] Because I need to be reading it more. But I have this self-sufficiency in what God's word has said, that people without him are dead, and we have to understand that.

And the only hope for this is his word and through his son and through a covenant, and that's how bones come to life. Does that make sense? I know it's hard.

I struggle with it. But it's the message of Ezekiel. It's the message of the word of God, and it's what God wants us to know. The next thing that has hit me and makes me struggle these last six months is just the words God grabbed him.

What you see here in this whole passage is that this whole story wouldn't even have happened if God hadn't come along and grabbed Ezekiel and put him into this impossible, desperate situation and told him to do something that was totally irrational and beyond his understanding, if God hadn't done that, none of those things would have happened.

And what you realize when you read the Bible is that God often does that with you and me. Jesus did it with his disciples. He gives them five loaves and some fish and says, okay, go feed 5,000 people.

[ 27 : 51 ] And the guys are like, what? How are we going to do that? And the message of Ezekiel, the message that we need to think about is that often God puts us into these situations that are humanly impossible.

He takes us into valleys, and he asks us to do hard things. He asks us to be patient. He asks us to wait. He asks us to trust.

He asks us to change. He asks us to share with people in our office place. He asks us to speak to dead bones. He asks us to use our resources.



He asks us to have hope in him. And what you see in this passage is that what God wants us to see in our life as we go on our journey, in this spiritual journey, especially when we're in the valleys, especially when we're in the difficult times, what God wants us to see, what he's trying to show Ezekiel, is that he's God, and he's in control.

And the question is, will we trust him? That God takes us into these valleys and these different impossible situations because he wants to grow us.

[ 29 : 03 ] He wants us to trust his word. He wants us to trust him. He doesn't want to trust Tobin's cleverness or your cleverness or your ability to connect and your money and all these things. God, if you're God's child, he's going to take you into a valley and he wants to take you there and he wants to show you that without him, it's impossible.

And if you never went into that valley, you would never see God in his mercy and in his grace and in his glory. I promise you, I'm not asking you to pray for valleys.

I mean, we feel like we've been in one now with health and people dying and relationships and just craziness, right? But what I realize is in the valley, we meet God.

We have to meet God. If you don't meet God, we're lost. So God wants to take you to a valley.

God wants you to trust him. God wants you to show you that he is enough, that he is in control and he doesn't just want you to do nothing because he takes Ezekiel there and he tells Ezekiel, just teach, speak, talk about God, talk about how good he is, talk about what he's doing in your life, talk about what he's teaching you.

[ 30 : 19 ] Through these words, I'm going to change you. Through these words, I'm going to change the people around you. Through these words, dead bones and dry bones are going to come to life. Just speak to the people. Speak his word.

Lord, the passage says that God is always in our lives. The passage says that God is always in our valleys.

The passage says that God is always in our hopelessness. He's always in our broken relationships. He's always in our strained work. He's always in our friendships that are out of control. He's always in our classrooms.

He's always, wherever he has his people, he is working there. He's speaking and he's just asking you, will you trust him? Will you trust him?

That's all he's asking us to do. Trust him and to speak of him. So God grabs us into these valleys and he places us in these places and he wants to change us and I think that is the biggest message that he's trying to teach us in the valley of bones is that we can try to work and we can try to do, we can try to do all these things and no matter what we do, we're always going to fall short because they're dead people and they're hopeless situations and only God can work in hopeless situations and only God can change dead people and only God can change your heart.

[ 31 : 47 ] This passage isn't just for people who aren't Christians yet. This passage is for people who are Christians but they've forgotten God because that's what happened to the people of God.

These are God's people he's talking to and they just forgot. They've turned their back and they've walked in different directions. When God looks at us he sees dryness, brokenness and he wants to heal us and bring us together does that make sense?

Everybody's really serious. One last thing. The thing that's awesome to me about this passage is that no matter what happens as God's people no matter what we do no matter how much we mess up that God is always pursuing us.

But if you're here right now that you're never too far away from God that God knows everything you've done. He knows your disobedience.

He knows your failures. He knows how you've broken his covenant. He knows the promises that he's given you and all these great things and he knows that you've loved those things more than you love the gift giver.

[ 33 : 11 ] the message of Ezekiel is that he knows that. He's pursuing you and he loves you and he's asking you will you come back? Will you come back?

That's the power of God's word. The power of God's word is to bring people who are dead to life. The power of God's word is to bring people who are far away near.

My prayer for us as a church is that we would always be a church that holds God's word secretly and truly and wholly with all the authority that we'd read it often.

I mean if you haven't been reading it for a while don't say I'm going to read an hour today because Tobin said this. It's not going to work. Read five minutes. Just open up the Psalms. Open up the Proverbs.

We're on a journey. We're not at the end yet. We don't want you to leave here and go well I should be doing this, this, and this, and this because that's works. Righteousness. We're people of grace.

[ 34 : 22 ] Spend five minutes a day and talk to God because he wants to hear from you and he wants to know you. Father I thank you for this day.

Father I thank you for this day. I pray for those brothers and sisters here who hear this message and they say rubbish. I'm doing okay.

I have my money. I have my cars. I have my houses. I have my family. I have my relationships. I have my health. I have my abilities. I don't need you. What I pray for those brothers and sisters who are dead bones that you would take them to a valley very soon where they would see that all the things they cling to are useless and that they change and they bring no hope.

They bring a temporary hope but not a true hope. Father I pray for those in our family here today who are not in the family and they realize that they're dead bones.

They realize that they are far far from you. I pray that they would hear your words spoken. I pray that they would hear and see your son.

[ 35 : 44 ] I pray that you would open their ears their eyes and their hearts so they might receive the message of your word a message of grace of healing of redemption.

I pray Lord that they would just confess how they've tried to live their life on their own and the brokenness that's in their hearts. Lord I pray that you would heal them not for me but for your glory because your word promises it.

And we're people of your word and we'll trust you. Lord I pray for the rest of us here who are on this journey spiritually with you already as your children. Lord I pray for us.

I pray for the deadness in our hearts sometimes. I pray for the callousness as we come to people who are lost and dying and broken and we just ignore them because we're too busy.

Pray for the brokenness in my heart as I come to your word and I just want to get it done. It's like a project. I need to get done. I need to do my hour today and then I'm okay. I can do whatever I need else to do. Lord I just ask your forgiveness.

[ 36 : 59 ] We need your healing. We need you to change us. Lord will you forgive us? Pray Lord that we would be a people who love you.

That we would love your word and we would hold it true and fast in our hearts and our minds because we'd realize it is the power to change. It's the power to change our lives every day as we walk with you.

The power to change dead people to live live people. The power to change the western side of Hong Kong. The power to change our work, our marriages, our hearts, our kids hearts wherever you send us.

Father we thank you for your word. Help us to be a people that hold it fast or nourished by it and changed by it in all that we do.

Lord we love you. We desperately, desperately need you. We pray all these things in your son Jesus Christ in the holy name.

[ 38 : 13 ]    Amen.