

LOVING THE RIGHT THINGS
That You May Know - I John Series - Week 5
Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. Once again it is good to have you back home, back here. And if you are watching us online, we want to welcome you as well, and we are glad that you have chosen to join us this morning from your home. And for those of us who have gathered here today, it is a beautiful day to be in the house of the Lord, and it is a beautiful day to be with God's people. And as you feel comfortable we are ready for you so come on in, and we will be looking forward to seeing you. Just keep your eyes on our social media pages and the website for instructions on how to make your plans to be here.

Before I begin this morning going back to I John in our series, Pastor Ben and I have been going back and forth discussing all week long what we should say to the church regarding the ongoing conflict in our nation, the protests that are taking place and the event that caused them. Because of our time schedule, and just simply because of our philosophy we can't say everything that needs to be said that we would like to say, as we only have a limited amount of time in which we gather on Sunday mornings. However, I do believe in moments that are historic in nature like this that we should always look to the word of God and that the church ought to have an important and unique voice, as we try to sort through the things that we see in our streets, on our television screens, and what we are discussing around our dinner tables as well.

So I have just a few things I would like to say. Racism is sinful and dishonors God. We believe that Jesus loves all races, nationalities and ethnicities equally. We all share a common heritage of image bearers of God because He is our creator. We also share a common need of salvation from sin. No race is superior, or is loved by God in any special way. We reject racism and its expression in every form, intentional and unintentional, both personal and systemic. Not only that, we will not be passive in defending our brothers and sisters in Christ within the church or any others outside of the church who have been created in the image of God, and who may be experiencing the consequences of racist attitudes.

Over the last week Pastor Ben and I, as well as the rest of our leadership team of pastors and directors, have been reaching out to our African American friends within our church and across our community. We are seeking to assure them of our love, and we are also listening to their experiences, their perspectives, and their concerns. Pastor Ben and I recorded a series of three podcasts, over an hour in total length, of conversations together with our friend Carl Lykes, who is an African American leader and educator in our community. We invite you to listen to our conversations with him on LIFETalks. They were released immediately after we recorded them. We didn't wait as we wanted to release them all in one group.

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At our next elders meeting which happens to be tomorrow night, the elders of the church will be discussing how we can support and encourage our African American family members in meaningful and intentional ways. How we can use our voices and influence to break down racial barriers and discrimination in all of its forms, and in all places. It has always been, and remains the mission and focus of this church, to be gospel centric.

Our activism is always built on a gospel foundation, whether it is standing for the unborn, or helping the impoverished, partnering with addiction intervention, or engaging in international ministries. As we seek God for ways that we can do something about the myriad issues of racism and oppression, we must always do so with the gospel at the center and at our core operating system.

We believe that when we address issues of transformation whether personal or societal it has to be done with the biblical worldview that includes a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ. And we are looking for gospel centric ways to address the issue of discrimination, injustice and systemic racism. And we are committed to showing love, not just in words, but in deed and by example.

There is no quick fix to this solution which to some extent is the consequence of the sin of slavery that is part of the American story. Our contribution to the discussion will be ongoing, and we would welcome your ideas and thoughts. But we would also charge each of you personally to be one person teams of ambassadors to those who may be hurting or oppressed. We challenge you to hold conversations now with people who do not share your skin tone, listen - listen, don't debate. Listen - don't assume you know their story. Ask questions, and then listen some more.

If you are a member of a minority community, share your story in love and honesty. We want to hear it, we need to hear it, and we are committed to listening. We believe that the Holy Spirit can and will use your words to convict and challenge and change us to live our out salvation with the grace and love and compassion that Christ modelled, and that Scripture demands. And we will all journey together and do our part to seek healing, and to encourage each other in the love of God made alive in us through the sacrifice of Christ.

So it is the responsibility of each of us to do what we can with those nearest to us, in our neighborhood, in our workplaces, when we interact in our community, to be ambassadors of the hope that is in Christ, to listen respectfully, to know pretend we have solutions apart from the word of God, but to speak with love and compassion. And be willing to sacrifice so that others may hear that the greatest hope of all is the hope that we find in Jesus Christ.

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Father, I pray for our nation today. I pray for our community. I pray for our leadership. And Father, I pray for the oppressed. I pray, Father, that in the midst of this, the things that even Satan would use for evil, that you would allow us to be part of your plan to use them for good, that tragedies can turn into triumph, that brokenness can turn into healing, that reconciliation with each other can occur as we are reconciled with you. Help us to be courageous, help us to be proactive, help us to be aware.

Open our minds and our hearts to see the truth that is around us that we may apply your Scripture to the decisions that we make. We pray for those who protest and we pray for those who protect, that in each of their lives your truth would take root, that salvation would occur, that repentance would be real, and that hope would be found. And Father, may we be testimonies of the transformative work of the gospel in everything we do and say as a church and as individuals. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

That is not the last thing that we want to say, or will say, but we feel like it is important that we begin somewhere. And we hope you will join us in that.

Now, please turn in your Bibles with me to I John Chapter 2. We are going to be back in our series that we are continuing into the summertime now, and we are going through this passage 'That You May Know.' I have said this often, and you could ask the elders what one of my constant things is that I need to ask, or you could ask the staff team, or you could ask my wife and that question is - what is Dan always looking for? And the answer is that I am always looking for clarity. I like clarity. I want to know what is expected of me, I want to know where I am supposed to go, and what I am supposed to do. I want to know these things because then I can act with surety and certainty.

And one of the wonderful things about this passage of Scripture that we are just about to read is in the whole context of each verse we see John the elderly apostle who is near the end of his journey, who has walked with Jesus and been through the fledgling days of the church, communicating to the early believers, the early church this: '*You can know. You can be sure. There is a right way. There is a certain truth. There is a real God. And this you may know.*'

So let's look at I John Chapter 2. I want to say to all the boys and girls who are in here that I am so glad that you are here. It is good to see you. I got a lot of fist bumps, and I know that is not quite social distancing, but we are going to let it go. I got a lot of fist bumps this morning as you were coming in. I see many of you have your worship pack activity bags. Some of you may be watching on line with mom and dad and having a bowl of Lucky Charms (which is my personal favorite) or some other delicious cereal. So you may want to ask your moms and dads to get you Lucky Charms this week.

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And if you are having that while you are watching I want you to do something while we read this passage of Scripture, okay? God always emphasizes and repeats what He wants us pay attention to. Does your mom or dad ever say, ‘*How many times do I need to tell you this? I have said this over and over and over again.*’

Well, you know God does that with us as well. There are times in His Word, in His Scripture that He repeats something because He wants it to catch our attention. So we are going to look in just these few verses that we are going to read for one word that is repeated. I want you to count along with me as I read it. And that word is ‘world.’ So listen and count how many times in these three verses you hear the word ‘world.’ Here we go.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life - is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

All right kids, how many times did we have the world there? Hold your fingers up. Right - six times, you got it. Congratulations, you were listening well. This is a passage that creates a stark choice on what we really ought to love. And John is saying that way too often in all of our lives, when it comes to choosing what we should love, we choose the world.

Now that word ‘world’ in the Scripture is an interesting word because it is the Greek word *kosmos*. And *kosmos* doesn’t just simply mean ‘the planet,’ in fact whenever you see the word ‘world’ most of you if you are like me think of the globe or a map of the world. You know that quintessential picture of the earth that is mostly blue but has some clouds kind of hanging around it, and you see some patches of land. So when I hear the word ‘world’ that is often what I think of. The planet earth - that is our world and that is where we live.

However, there is more to it than that. When the Word of God says ‘the world,’ it is not referring to just the planet earth, but it is referring to a system, an overall system. And that system is the things that happen all around us. God works in systems. You can study science and you will see system after system - mathologically, scientifically, and in physics. All these different areas are systems that God has put in place.

And often what man has done is we have created our own systems, and we get frustrated by those. But there is a system that exists in the world which is the system of the world that John is referencing here, and it is a system through which Satan functions.

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It is how he orchestrates his agenda. It is those things that are important to him. And today we have a choice that we have to make on whether we are going to love the things of this current system, this broken world, this cosmos that has been marred, or we are going to choose the things of God, the things that Jesus taught about, the things that Scripture emphasizes, the things that are in our future, the hope of eternity, the things that are going to be happening later.

And so John is saying with a lot of clarity this: *‘One of the things that you need to know is what you love most. And are you choosing to love that which God wants you to love?’* So John is kind of putting this out here for us. Over and over again you will see it in this letter. He is warning us that there is this war between the worlds so to speak. There is a war between the devil and God. There is a war between darkness and light as we looked at in Chapter 1. There is a war between truth and lies, between doubt and certainty, between the world here and Heaven, between the earthly flesh and the Holy Spirit, between the anti-Christ and the Spirit of Christ, between the temporal and the eternal.

So God is drawing here through His Word, through John’s word, this picture that we are always in a situation where we must choose. It is a constant wrestling match and at times it is all out warfare. *‘What are you going to love? What is going to be most important to you? What is going to be your priority?’* Every day you and I have to make choices, and these choices are between right and wrong and good and evil. We make thousands and thousands of decisions every day. *‘What am I going to wear? What am I going to eat for breakfast? Which route am I going to take to work? What am I going to listen to on the radio? What am I going to watch on TV? What book will I read? What am I going to say when I see someone?’*

Every day you are a process and constantly making these decisions over and over and over again. *‘Will I tell a lie? Will I tell the truth? Will I answer fully? Will I answer partially? Will I eat this? Will I drink that?’* All day long - no wonder we are tired and need to take a nap from time to time. We are making decisions.

And what happens is we often develop a habit or a pattern of making decisions that limit the amount of thinking we do when we make our decisions. It becomes almost instinctive, almost impulsive how we make our decisions. And what happens is if we can start thinking the wrong way, loving the wrong things, and prioritizing the wrong things. And if we start doing those things we will find ourselves in a habit of making wrong decisions, poor decisions, and decisions that are outside God’s best for us, and it impacts our character.

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Our character is the product of the long term consequences of the decisions we make, and these decisions are a reflection of how we think and what we believe. Ultimately how we choose and what we choose is a reflection of how we think, what we believe, what we love most, and what we love best. And Scripture tells us here Satan has a way of influencing these decisions by confusing our thinking and by deceiving our hearts. He raises doubts about God, he entices with lies, he appeals with deceit and he offers short term pleasures at the expense of long term treasures.

So we are going to take a look at that this morning. I have a couple of things we are going to look at, and because we have so many kids in the room I kind of wanted to do something that will involve the kids. But I have to tell you we are all just kids, right? We are all making choices, and we all make decisions the right way or the wrong way. So if you are a little older I don't want you to just tune out and think this is just for the kids, because it is not. In fact it is more for us than it is for them.

What I want to do is kind of take a look at what the Scripture says and illustrate it on how Satan sometimes gets us to make decisions his way rather than God's way. I am going to need a volunteer. Jase, why don't you come on up here. This is one of my favorite guys.

Dan: *'How are you doing, man?'*

Jase: *'Good.'*

Dan: *'Will you fist bump me? Okay, excellent. How old are you, Jase.'*

Jase: *'Seven.'*

Dan: *'I hear someone in your house has a birthday; it is not you, right? Who is it?'*

Jase: *'It is my sister, Ava.'*

Dan: *'And how old is she today?'*

Jase: *'Six.'*

Dan: *'All right, so she is catching up to you. You better have another birthday because she is catching up to you. All right, we are going to come over here. I guess I should use the microphone so we could hear you better. How old are you again, Jase?'*

Jase: *'Seven.'*

Dan: *'Okay, we don't want to forget that. I have something for you here. I feel like let's make a deal here. I have two boxes here. I have a very pretty box here that I worked all week long wrapping. Do you believe that?'*

Jase: *'No.'*

Dan: *'Right, never believe Satan's lies, okay? Or Pastor Dan's. But someone did wrap this for me. It looks pretty good, doesn't it? And I have another smaller box here too. And I have to tell you that there is something in both of these boxes and*

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whichever one you pick I am going to let you have what is in it. Now I will tell you this - what is in this box I picked out personally, so I know what is in there already. I also know enough about you to know that you are probably going to like what is in this box right here. And I think you would like what is in this other box too. But here is the difference - whatever is in this box is yummy, it's cool, it's pretty, there is more than one, and you can have it right now. Okay? Or in this box I am going to be honest with you and tell you that it is valuable, it is important, but you are not going to be able to use it for a long time. Okay? But if you pick this first box let me tell you I think you are going to say 'wow' when you see it. Because who wouldn't like a box like that, right? So I want you to think, because it is big decision time. I have this pretty box right here and this other smaller box right over there. Which box do you want the prize that is in it?

Jase picks the small box.

Dan: *That one? (Laughter and applause.) Now let me ask you a question. You are a pretty smart guy. Why do you think you want that box?*

Jase: *'Because I don't care about this box. I want to know what is inside this other box.'*

Dan: *'You want to know what is inside. So you are telling me you are willing to wait for the best; is that what you are saying?'*

Jase: *'Yes.'*

Dan: *'You're sure.'*

Jase: *'Yes.'*

Dan: *'But I'm telling you that in this pretty box right here I know for a fact you are going to like what is in it. I know for a fact you are going to say 'Ahh.' Now do you want this box or that box?'*

Jase: *'That one.'* He again picks the smaller box. (Laughter and applause.)

Dan: *'Okay. So let me show you what you missed. Do you like lollipops?'*

Jase: *'Yes.'*

Dan: *'You do. And you know your sister has a birthday, so do you have a birthday present for her yet?'*

Jase: *'Yes.'*

Dan: *'You do. I just thought you would maybe want this one for your sister. And I heard you really like lollipops. Okay, so would you rather have the lollipops, or have this other box?'*

Jase: *'That box.'* He still picks the smaller box. (Laughter and applause.)

Dan: *'You haven't changed your mind? Are you sure? Now remember this - there is something in this box you could have had too. Are you sure that is what you want? You aren't sure? Am I confusing you? Choices are sometimes hard, boys and girls. I want you to remember that. It is hard. So here is your choice. You can either take the lollipop box and leave, or you can lift up that box and see what is there.'*

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Jase selects the smaller box and opens it.

Dan: *'Wow, what is that?'*

Jase: *'A hundred dollar bill.'*

Dan: *'A hundred dollars? Holy smoke. Do you know what that is for? That is for your college fund. (Applause.) I want you to take that and give it to your dad because here is what is going to happen. In about ten more years you are going to be graduating from high school and you are going to need a lot of money for college. And this is going to help you out. Now don't go and buy lollipops with it, because you could buy 200 lollipops with that, or at least 200. Are you happy you made that decision?'*

Jase: *'Yes.'*

Dan: *'You sure? Absolutely? Positively?'*

Jase: *'Absolutely. Positively.'*

Dan: *'Okay. So now you get both. Here you go. Thank you for helping me, Jase.' (Applause.)'*

Decision making is not always easy. But it is possible to make the right decision even under pressure, even when you are young, even when something looks glamorous if you know the truth and if you trust in the right things. And that is what I want you to remember this morning. You know Satan isn't quite this obvious with big boxes and small boxes and a lot of rigmarole, and the decision sometimes does not occur over a longer period of time. Sometimes it is made very quickly. But make no mistake, every one of us today makes decisions that have both short term potential and long term impact. And we need to make sure that we are making them wisely.

So I want us to ask ourselves some questions about if we are actually loving the right things as we make decisions. I am going to refer back to this in just a moment but I want to give you three things from the Scripture that we know about figuring out what we really love. If we love the wrong things here is the first thing that often happens - we are going to have a reliance on feelings. In those cases we will choose short term pleasures rather than long term joy. Short term pleasures rather than long term joy. That is what the Scripture calls the desires of the flesh.

Let's go back and look at that passage again. I am going to read it without the emphasis on the word 'world' this time, but you need to keep it in your mind because remember the world means Satan's system here, the system that exists all around us, that is trying to separate us from God. ***"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world (and then he lists them) - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life - is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."***

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The choice is pretty stark. When we have a reliance on feelings, here is what happens. We start thinking about its personal impact on us. *'Is it going to meet my needs? Is it going to feed my appetite?'* And this worldly broken system that you and I live on is driven by appetite. And let's admit it - for many of us today when we look at the boxes it isn't something so simple as long term investing and short term lollipops, right? But actually it is, because you know there are many people today who are looking at long term healthy relationships with their family in a bottle of Jack Daniels. And they choose the sort term relief that a bottle might provide over the long term health of their relationship.

For others it could be security at home and a lovely family and a spouse that loves them versus a cheap thrill - a good looking gym partner, somebody at the office, a neighbor who looks just the right way when they go by - and they will throw away the long term for the short term, the thing that requires investment, attention and a prioritized committed love for the short term cheap thrill of an illicit relationship.

You can take this and create your own scenario based on your appetite and your weakness. For some it could be shopping. For some it could be ego. For some it could be anger. For some it could be money. For some it could be just being popular. We sell out for the wrong things all the time for that quick fix that comes with the bright packaging and the appeal to our appetite.

And John was saying to the early church, *'Beware! Satan has set up a system that he desires to use to separate you from God. And the way he does this is he gives you the wrong things to love, and he makes it look glamorous. He makes it look cool, he makes it look sexy, he makes it look pretty, he makes it look easy, and he makes it look fulfilling, but in the end you are trading trinkets for treasure.'* So beware of those appetites.

Now you understand God gives us appetites. If we didn't have an appetite for oxygen we would all stop breathing, pass out, and life would be over. If we didn't have an appetite for food we would all be in a bad way in about three days to in some cases three months, but eventually it would catch up to us; would it not? If we did not have an appetite for sex, we would eventually get to the point where population would die out. You understand if you didn't have an appetite for sleep you would die. By the way you would die of exhaustion before you die of a lack of food.

These appetites are given to us by God, but what God creates perfect Satan likes to pervert. And so Satan takes those appetites and says, *'I want you to love these appetites more than He who created those appetites.'* See there is nothing wrong with food, or sleep, or achievement, or of taking care of your needs; it is when the appetite takes control that we start living in that moment in what the Scripture says are, ***“the***

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desires of the flesh.” And we have to watch out for those. We have to be careful when we choose short term pleasures rather than long term joy.

But then John also said we need to understand this, there is a second thing we have to be careful of, and that is the desires of the eyes. And here is what happens with that - it is an absence of faith. An absence of faith is when we choose what we see rather than what we are promised. When we choose what we see rather than what we are promised. Now Jase here is a wise young man. He was discerning. He knew Pastor Dan was getting ready to pull one over on him. And even at his age he stopped and calculated and looked beyond the immediate lie, or the immediate enticement, and he chose wisely for the long term.

And one of Satan’s diabolical plans and strategies is to whisper lies to us that make us doubt whether what God has said is really true. And you can take that all the way back to the Garden of Eden. In the Garden Satan said to Eve, *‘Has God really said? You are not really going to die. God is holding something good back from you.’* Satan told her three lies that had her doubt what she had previously believed in faith.

Every day of our lives we have to make decisions on whether or not we believe if God is real and if His Word is true. And we are going to make that decision over and over and over again. And there are going to be times in our lives where that decision is really, really big time. All of you teenagers here, listen to me for just a moment, will you? There is going to come a time in your life, somewhere probably during your high school years or your college years, where you are going to have to decide whether or not this stuff that your mom and dad, or your Christian school teacher, or Pastor Justin, or Pastors Ben and Dan have told you is really real. You are going to have to make that decision.

I remember the times that it occurred in my own life. See, as you mature different parts of your brain mature as well, you are able to make decisions differently, and you also have independence to make those decisions. And when you are making those decisions it is one of the most crucial times to ask yourself the question - *‘who is speaking to me at this moment and what am I going to trust in?’* For me it was when I was fifteen years old and I almost died. I woke up in the hospital disoriented and didn’t know what had happened to me. My dad looked me in the face and he said, *‘Dan, you almost died.’* I didn’t remember what happened. I was unconscious when all this happened. But do you know what the first thought that came to my mind was? I am not really sure if I know Christ personally. Oh, when I was six years old I had asked Jesus into my heart, but I know that at that point in my life I was making decisions and listening to things that indicated to me that I had not completed that journey with God

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and made it personal. And I decided I didn't even want to leave this hospital bed until I nailed it down.

And there was another time in my life when I was in my twenties and all of a sudden some things happened in my life that I didn't see coming. And they were catastrophic, they made me angry, and they made me bitter. And at that time in my life I began questioning whether or not God really loved me, because I thought if I did good things God would give me good things. I had some kind of deal in my head with God that said, *'God loves me because I am good. And if I am good I am good with Him.'*

And I realized that God loves me not because I am good, He loves me because He is good. And when it came to that moment, I doubled down and I said, *'God, if you take every good thing away from me that I think is good, I still trust that in the long term it is for my good. I choose the brown box. I am not going to choose the fame, not choose the money, not choose the perfect family, not choose all these things that I thought were important and were consequences of my decision to follow you. God, if you want to leave me a paraplegic, if you want to take away everybody I love, if you want to keep me in poverty all my life, if you want to give me cancer, if you want to take away my mom, if you want to take away my wife, if you want to keep me from having children - all the things that I thought were so important, I still - I still - I still want you.'*

Those were big decisions and I remember them today with absolute clarity. Why? Because it was at that moment that I had to choose which box I really believed in. And folks, understand this, Satan will over and over in your life use circumstances and things that are happening to get you to question whether God is real, whether He loves you, and whether you can trust His word. It may be in a college dorm, it may be in a hospital room, it may be when you go home and you find out that your house has been burglarized or burned down, it may be when the boss says, *'I'm taking away your job and you are now unemployed,'* it may be when a pandemic hits, it may be when a riot breaks out, it may be just simply you read the wrong thing and now you are questioning everything you believe.

There comes these times in life where you have to decide whether you are going to believe this or decide that your whole life is a lie. And John made it really clear we should not trade the short term for the long term. We have to have faith that He who has begun a good work in us will be faithful to complete it, and that He will fulfil His promises to us.

Then the third thing John talks about is the appetite for fame. That's the pride of life. And that is when we choose what others think of us rather than what God thinks of us. You know there is this constant desire to be accepted, isn't there? The desire to be

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one of the cool kids, and to fit in. And Satan will constantly use this appetite for fame, appetite for acceptance, appetite for importance, or appetite for achievement that feeds our ego all the time. If you want the pretty girl, if you want the great guy, if you want the nice house, if you want the corner office, if you want to live in the good toney neighborhood, if you want to drive the cool car, if you want to wear the cool clothes, if you want people to stop talking when you walk in the room, if you want lots of followers on Instagram, if you want lots of ‘likes’ on Facebook, if you want lots of followers on Tik Tok, if you want these things more than you love God, then Satan can say: *‘Congratulations, you bought into the system.’*

But God says, *‘I have another box for you and it is a long term box, but the payoff is far better and the rewards are far more exceptional. It was purchased with the blood of my Son. But you are going to have to have faith, you are going to have to wait, you are going to have to believe, you are going to have to love me first, and love me most. But I will fulfil my promises.’* Too often we choose what others think rather than what God has already done for us.

So what do we do? I am almost out of time, so very quickly here are three things I want you to consider. Number one - we have to stop living impulsively. When we look at the end of this passage and see what the Scripture is saying, John makes some things very clear. He says, *‘Understand this, the world is passing away. And when it passes away all of its desires are going to pass away as well. But whoever does the will of God will abide forever.’*

You see we take these short term fixes like a lollipop, a piece of candy, a quick fix, or the moment of the thrill and we trade them because we live impulsively. Many of the worst decisions we will ever make are the decisions we make on impulse, the decisions we make without thought, the decisions we make without considering the long term ramifications of who we love most and best.

It was the downfall of Cain when he murdered Abel. It was the downfall of Saul when he disobeyed God. It was the downfall of Samson when he chose Delilah. It was the downfall of David when he chose Bathsheba. It was the downfall of Jonah when he ran to Tarshish. It was the downfall of Peter when he whacked off the high priest servant’s ear and when he cursed in front of the Roman soldiers. Impulsively, quick, spur of the moment, didn’t think about it, but in those moments truth emerged, and consequences played out. We have to stop living impulsively. And the way we make good decisions is to think about the long term and not the short term.

I want to say this to all of us, whether it is for a raise, or to keep your boyfriend or girlfriend, whether it is to get ahead, to win, to feel good, to ease your pain, to forget

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something, or to achieve something, decisions that are made apart from a thoughtful examination of the Word of God are dangerous decisions. And John was warning us of that.

Secondly - we need to remain mindful that the struggle is daily. Every day we are going to struggle with this for the rest of our lives until this world system passes away. I had the opportunity to visit the Serengeti Plain last summer a year ago this month. I got to go to Kenya and Tanzania and see the Serengeti Plain. And every single morning there a lion is going to wake up knowing that today he has to run faster than the slowest wildebeest or zebra, or he is going to go hungry. And every day on that same Serengeti Plain a zebra wakes up knowing that today he is going to have to run faster than the slowest wildebeest, or he is going to be dinner for a lion. And the moral of the this story is - if you live on the Serengeti Plain whether you are a lion or a wildebeest or a zebra you better be prepared to run that day.

And the fact is you and I today when we wake up need to understand that Satan woke up too, and he has a plan for our defeat, a plan for our bad mistake, a plan for our poor choice, a plan for our destruction. And every day you have to realize that you have to be smarter than the devil. You have to be smarter than the choices he is going to put in your path, and you have to be ready to fight him because it is a big battle.

The third thing is this - seek to know and yield to the will of God. I am so frustrated because I only have thirty minutes this morning and this passage has about thirty days' worth of materials in it, so I hope you are going to go home and study it some more. I feel bad because this is such an important passage. The Scripture says to seek and know the will of God because it lasts forever. The Bible tells us if we love God to keep His commandments.

“This is the will of the Father concerning you” is said over and over and over in Scripture. Some of us think the will of God is Him sitting up there playing some kind of shell game where He puts His will underneath one of the shells and scrambles them around. Then He tells us to pick which one, and we pick one. And God says, *‘Missed my will, guess you are out of luck.’* And that is not how God operates. God makes His will really, really clear. In fact He put it in black and white. It is not complicated and it is not mysterious. It is found in the Bible. ***“If you love me keep my commandments.” “Trust my word.” “Abide in me.” “Love me first and best.”*** It is there with clarity.

Many of us are looking for something mysterious when it is right in front of our eyes. But you know if you don't read it, you won't know it. And if you don't obey it then is of no power and of no use. So one of the ways that we live with clarity, one of the

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ways that we demonstrate our faith, one of the ways that we choose the right box, is for us to make sure that we are obeying the Word of God.

I am out of time but I want to say this to you. As you leave here, and as you talk about this with your children, whether you are going to do it in a few moments or whether you are going to do it on the car ride home, whether you have children or whether they are all grown up, let's stop and ask these questions - when it comes time to make choices and decisions are we making them with eternity in mind? Are we making them with the Word of God as our foundation? Or are we letting our impulses, our appetites, the quick fix, or a lack of faith guide the decisions that we make every day?

You see when we make the right decision and we look at the outcome there is an affirmation. No one in here said, '*Jase, you should have chosen the lollipops because anyone can get a hundred bucks.*' There will come a day when it comes right down to it that we will stand before God and He will look at me and say, '*Dan, well done good and faithful servant. Enter now into the joy of my presence.*' And every decision, every choice, every appetite that was left unfulfilled, every word that I left unsaid, every sin that I wanted to commit but I hadn't, is going to bear fruit in that moment.

You don't get to Heaven because you do the good things; but when you love Him first and best you show every day that He is indeed King of your heart and Lord of your agenda and that you are really His, and that this stuff really matters. This message is - 'That you may know.' Let's pray.

Father, I pray that as we leave this room in just a few moments that you will use your Word in our hearts and lives to be more like you, to make the better decisions, to follow through on the priority that we have promised you, so that we do not become casualties or that we are not revealed as imposters. But that, Father, that we are genuinely living out our faith. And Father, if we find ourselves this morning where we have no desire to live out your Word, that we don't obey you, that we don't love you first and most, I pray that your Holy Spirit will convict us, call us to repentance and call us to salvation. Father, for those this morning who have a lifetime of choosing the flesh rather than choosing truth, choosing the world system rather than choosing faith in you, Father, before they leave here today may they go out to the Prayer Table sitting out front and tell someone there that they want to know for sure they are going to Heaven when they die.

On the day that I woke up in that hospital room I remember saying that I had to know for sure. You established that to me. So Father, may each of us have that time in our life where we know that we indeed love you first and best, having received your call to salvation and repentance. Father, help us to choose wisely out of a heart of love towards you and out of obedience to your Word. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

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The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.