

ST. TIMOTHY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

REV. IN KEE KIM

Preface

The main purpose of the Happiness Seminars is to explore the question of what constitutes a fruitful and vibrant life. Rev. In Kee Kim would explore different topics related to a life worth living. He examined what thinkers say about these topics and bring them into dialogue with Scripture and our faith tradition. These make for incredibly rich reflections and explorations of topics that relate to our human existence.

These seminars were delivered at our annual ESM Retreats. The seminars were recorded and are available in audio format. Summer students then transcribed those audio recordings into readable transcripts. That is what you have here.

We pray that these seminars may enrich your life and help you in your life journey!

Sincerely,

St. Timothy Presbyterian Church

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Meaning of Life

Rev. In Kee Kim

Meaning of Life: Part 1

[Link to the Audio Player](#)

Introduction

Welcome to this seminar. A few of you, even some unexpected people, approached me and said, "I came up to the retreat for the topic, the meaning of life. That is something that I really like to think about and reflect on." Tonight, I'm not here to inspire you or make you excited. I think inspiration has to come from within. After the lecture, you probably will understand what I mean by that. So I'm not going to be the one who makes you excited, you are the one who makes yourself excited and your life exciting. So, hopefully, every one of you who's here really wants to tackle with the question of 'What is the meaning of life?' Not the kind of meaning of life that other people told me or other religious leaders told me, but what is really meaningful in my life? What is that meaning that I live with? And I hope that throughout three lectures we may be able to reflect on it really seriously and honestly. Not just smoothly going over, but really tackle on it - "What is my meaning of life?" I hope, that we can get to that not only through the lectures but also through group discussion. I hope that you can share some of your stories too in the group discussions.

Asking the Right Questions

Meaning of life is a very difficult topic. My friend, who is also a pastor, asked me, "So these days, what are you doing?" And I said, "I'm preparing a series on the meaning of life." And he just looked at me and said, "Good luck. If you find it, let me know." Yes, it is kind of a difficult topic to really answer with one answer.

What is the meaning of life? "One. This is the meaning..." No, there's no such thing as that kind of answer. We like to reflect on what really it entails. I mean, we have a few questions about the meaning of life. Is life supposed to have a meaning? Is it the right question? Or is it something like, is 'orchestra' written in past tense or present tense? 'Orchestrate' is not written either in past tense or present tense, it's not the right question. So, does life have meaning? Is that the right question? Some people question that. Is life

supposed to have meaning? Or are we supposed to just live? What does meaning do to your life? What difference does knowing the meaning of your life do to your life? Or, what happens to your life if you don't have the meaning of life? Is meaning built? Is meaning built-in in your life? Or is it something outside of your life? So these are some questions. Charles Schultz, creator of Snoopy, he says this, "My life has no purpose, no direction, no aim, no meaning. And yet, I'm happy. I can't figure it out. What am I doing right?"

Most of us don't think about the meaning of life all the time. Usually, when we ask that question, we go through some life crisis. So, to most of us during a crisis, the meaning of life is a life or death question. A very serious question, but in normal times we don't ask that question.

Ask the Question

Do we have to ask ourselves the meaning of life? My first lecture is to tell you that we have to. It is the most important question we can ask in our lives. Albert Camus, who is a Nobel Prize winner for literature, said this, "I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living. What is called the reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying. I, therefore, conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions." I agree with him. The question of the meaning of life is the most urgent question. I personally think that having and knowing the meaning of life is not an option for life. It is a necessity. You may be happy, but if your happiness is not connected with a sense of meaning in your life, that happiness is on a crumbling foundation. We human beings by nature question and think, that's part of what human beings are. We have no choice but to question and think. So, we question what we live for, we question what is the purpose of my life? And until we have a relatively clear understanding of why we live, we cannot be naively happy. But if we know why we live, we can almost bear any how. That's what Nietzsche said. "If you know why you live, you can almost bear any how."

The standard of living has gotten much better over the last 30 to 40 years. 30 to 40 years ago, a lot of houses did not even have running water, but now every home has running water. Our standard of living got much better, but did our happiness get much better? The study doesn't show that. A study says that our happiness level is a little bit down, more down than 30 or 40

years ago. I see a lot of people who see no point in continuing their life. They see no point in continuing their life, not because they don't have money or food to eat, but because they don't see any meaning in their life. When I go to Evangel Hall, Teasdale, Yonge Street Mission... you know, poverty is a result of it, but first, they lost why they live. They lost the meaning and after that, they became really, really depressed, and that's why they are depending on other people for food. So, if you think that, "Oh, they're just poor, let's give them the food." That's not enough. First, the meaning wasn't there. A lot of people felt tremendous depression and then after that, they went through that problem.

Emptiness

Feeling total absence of meaningfulness of life can paralyze you. If you don't see any point, then that can paralyze you. It can happen to anybody. It happened to Tolstoy when he turned 50, so those who are turning 50, be careful. Be careful when you turn 50, it might suddenly attack you. Tolstoy said, "I did not know how to live or what to do, and I lost myself and was dejected. I had no foundation to stand on." In his book, Confession, he said this: "It happened also to very spiritual persons like people that you know very well. Prophet Elijah, he was the prophet of Israel, but after he fought against the Baal, he went down under the tree. He said, Lord, I can't continue this. Just kill me. I cannot go on." He didn't see any point of going on.

I think people are scared of feeling emptiness and meaninglessness. They're scared of it. To avoid the feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness, some people try to make themselves busy so that they don't have to ask these questions. Or by making themselves busy, they may be fooling themselves thinking that, "Oh, I'm full of life." But full of activities and full of life are two different things. Just because you are full of activities that don't mean that you are full of life. So we continuously create activities so then we may fool ourselves that, "I am full of life!" But those two are two different things. We do so many things, but it is possible that we don't know how these things are connected with each other. I mean, we do a lot of things, but we don't even think about how these things are connected with each other. We have so many experiences, but we don't know how these experiences are connected together. But I believe that all these things happen in your life. All the experiences that you have in your life are all not just random events. They are not disconnected experiences. I mean, you had all kinds of experiences, but they are not isolated disconnected events. They are somehow all

connected together. They are very much connected and shape and make uniquely who you are.

A different Journey

I am unique, and you are unique. My DNA tells me that, but not only my DNA but my life experiences tell me that. The life experiences that you have are very, unique to you alone. Nobody has the same experiences. You are the only one who experienced all those things and those experience made uniquely who you are. My life is being shaped uniquely. I don't know exactly how these things that happened in my life are playing out, you know, the certain shape called my life. But definitely, they are not just random events. They shaped my life. We don't always see that all the times. For example, when you see a tapestry when you see the front is a beautiful picture, but when you turn it around, what do you see? A whole bunch of just threads and going around. You don't know what it looks like, but when you turn it around, when you change the view, you see the beautiful picture.

Our life sometimes is like that. It looks like all these connected events and experiences that I go through, but when you look at it the other way, at the end when you see it, "Oh! There's a shape! There's a beautiful shape in my life." Sometimes we discover that. Philosopher Kierkegaard said, "Although life has to be lived forward, its full meaning is to be understood only retrospectively." While you're going through it, you don't understand fully what it means, but when you look back... "Ah! These things are connected and made me who I am!" So only retrospectively can we understand? The life you experience it, you experience it now, but only later will you understand what it looks like. We are not just dropped off from heaven or from different time zones. We have become who we are by all the things that happen in our life.

So, as you look back, you see a path which your life has taken. You will be able to see that path. As we look back, there is a story that has been formed. So sometimes people call life a journey. The journey has a destination, the journey has a direction, and the journey has a goal. In the same way in life, there is a destination, direction, and our efforts to get our goal. As you find your story, you can find your meaning in life. You have a unique story and you have a unique meaning that is in your life, and we need to find that. If I describe my life metaphorically, I'll use the image of a conveyor belt. My life was not on a conveyor belt. What I mean is, we didn't just do activities on a

prefixed pattern of life. We were shaping a certain pattern of life. I would snap passively on the conveyor belt, but I was shaping a certain pattern of my life. We are not just mapping readers, we were, and we are map makers. We're not just reading the map of life, we are continuously making a new map in our life. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow are not disconnected. What happened yesterday influenced today to make who you are. What I decide today influences what I will be tomorrow. So, these are not just random disconnected events. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, they're all connected together. It is one long stream of a river.

That's a better image. One long stream of the river. Your river has a particular shape, and each river has a different and particular shape. Waters in your river follow the pattern of the river, but also what I discovered was that waters in your river did not just follow the pattern but created a new pattern over the years. Over a long period of time, it created the new shape of the river. Do you understand what I'm saying? The water did not just passively follow the pattern, but it created a new pattern, new shape, in the river. We have to understand what our patterns look like because our understanding of what is going on in our life has a crucial role in shaping our life. My existence did not happen accidentally. Who you are did not happen accidentally. Your success, your failure, your upbringing, your education, your mistakes, your family, your friends, your decisions, your hurt, your pain, all these things work together to shape who you are now. Having been is the surest kind of being.

Context

Having been is the surest kind of being. So, we cannot ask generally about the meaning of life. "What is the meaning of life" is a meaningless question. You cannot ask generally about the meaning of life. The meaning of life has to be specifically connected to who you are. Asking generally about the meaning of life is like asking the best chess player in the world, "What is the best chess move?" Without context, you don't know what it is.

The meaning of life has to be answered in my very specific and particular context. Do you understand, are you following me? About the stories, about life, and all that? Okay, now let's see. Let's see what the Bible says. What does the Bible say about life? How does the Bible describe life? The Bible says life as a story also. By telling us the story of Abraham, the Bible shows us the narrative nature of life. Abraham's life was not just a bunch of disconnected and disjointed activities, and we wrote down a few things,

Pastor Sohn worked hard to find some discretion about Abraham's life, Jacob's life and Joseph's life. So, you can read it later. But when you look at Abraham's life, Abraham's life was not just disjointed activities. He didn't happen to come to Canaan, he didn't happen to have a son, Isaac, he didn't happen to live the way he did. As we look at Abraham's life, there is a theme. It wasn't just life, generally life. There was a theme. What was the theme, you think? What was the theme of Abraham's life?

Faith and obedience. That was the theme of Abraham's life. His life stories are weaved together to create the story of faith and obedience. His story reaches a climax when he was asked to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Even at that climax, his faith and obedience play out. So, his life was a life of faith and obedience.

How about Jacob's life? Jacob's life was very, very different from Abraham's life. Jacob's story was a story of what? Struggle. Jacob's story was a story of struggle. Even when he was born, he grabbed the heel of his twin brother Esau so that he could beat him all his life. All his life he was competitive. He had to struggle. Nothing came easily to him. He had to earn it, fight it, struggle it. Nothing came to him on a silver platter. His life was wrestling all the time. His life was a struggle. Even getting his wife was so difficult. You know how he got his wife? He had to work for seven years. I don't think any man here worked that hard. Seven years of labour! Finally, he got his wife. And the next morning he got up, "Huh? It's not my wife! It's not the woman I wanted to get married! Somebody else!" So, Laban kind of tricked him, "You have to work another seven years to get the wife that you want." So, he had to work again for seven years to get the real wife that he loves. Wow. Any man, if you have that kind of devotion, you can get a wife. I mean Jacob, everything was a struggle. Everything was a struggle. Even getting his position was a struggle. He had to fight for it. He had to prevail over others. The climax comes to when before he went back to Canaan, right before Jabbok River, he was really scared because he cheated his brother. So now he had to face his brother. He might kill him. So, he was really scared. But that night, what happened? He wrestled with an unknown man. Typical of Jacob, wrestling. All night he struggled with this unknown man, and at the end, he was changed. He was given a new name, Israel. Israel, it has two meanings; it can be he prevailed over this unknown man, or it is God reigns. It has both meanings. I think the latter name is his real name. I mean all his life he struggled, but in the end, he submitted to God and let God reign in his life.

That was Jacob's life, very different from Abraham's life. The river of Abraham looks very different from the river of Jacob.

How about Joseph? His life was all about what? Dream. Even when he was young, he had a dream and because of his dream, he got into trouble with his brothers and his father and ultimately because of his dream, he got kicked out from Israel and he was sold into Egypt. In Egypt, he was in the prison and then because of his dream he was saved, and because of his dream he went to the top position of Egypt, and because of his dream, he could save all his family. His life was about the dream. So, you see, every single person has a different theme, a different life, very unique to their own situations. What the Genesis writer is trying to say is, life is not just a total sum of disjointed activities. Bible tells us that, so don't live like that. Your life is not just the total sum of your activities, disjointed activities. Events make a story and the story has a theme. And each person has a unique theme to live, and that story continues until we die. Your story is not over. It will continue until you die.

A Story to be Made

But many times, when I see people they live as though they are on a conveyor belt. They don't want to make any changes. They are scared of changes. But the changes are not always all bad. Without changes, our life story cannot continue. Changes are the ones who shape your story of life. When there are changes, these changes make a new pattern in your life, so changes are not necessarily all bad. Changes actually let your story continue to be written.

I'll show you Moses' example. Moses was the greatest leader of Israel, but his life can be divided into three stages. First 40 years and second 40 years and third 40 years. First 40 years, where was he? He was in a palace. He had privilege, power and everything. Second 40 years, where was he? I mean, he was full of ambition, but because he killed somebody, he had to run away. So, the next 40 years, he lived in a kind of green pasture with wives and comfortably. And so, "Ah, this is good. I'm going to finish my life here," but God approached him. "No, no. I want you to go into Egypt and save these people." And then Moses said, "No, I don't want changes. This is good. I have wives. I have children. My life is good now." But God said, "No, your story is not finished. Your story's only half finished. It's not even written yet." And He sent Moses in the wilderness. Without the last 40 years, you

probably would not have known Moses. Without the last stage of his life, Moses is nothing. His life is nothing. His story is nothing. So sometimes changes are difficult, but changes make your life truly meaningful.

Changes can bring about what you are really about. And these changes can really make your life meaningful. So, don't be scared of changes. When changes come, don't automatically reject them. Embrace changes happening in your life.

The meaning of life is not something you take arbitrarily. "Okay, I don't have meanings. So, what should I say? Oh yeah, maybe I go to St. Timothy Church from now on. That's my meaning. Oh, maybe I go mission, or maybe I'll be a missionary. I think that will give me real true meaning." Oh no, no, no. Meaning is not something you choose arbitrarily like that just because you feel empty. Just because you feel meaningless, you don't just arbitrarily choose and then make it as your meaning of life. And nor is the meaning of life out there somewhere and you have to go find it. No, the meaning of life is being formed in your life journey, being written out in your life. Because of fear of changes, if you reject changes, we will not be able to let our life write a story and complete the story. Then the meaning of life will not be fulfilled.

The meaning of life is not in the events themselves, so don't try to create meaningful events. Because meaning does not reside in the events themselves. How the event started, what result these events brought to you, what story these events made in your life, and through all that you understand the shape of it. For example, I came to Canada when I was 19 and I went to the University of Toronto, and I studied there, and I went to a Korean Inter-Varsity Christian fellowship. And in there, by serving God, serving that group, I was called to go into ministry. So, I went to ministry. Now I'm standing here preaching to you.

This is not just an accident. I believe that every single event worked together to make me who I am. So, the even physical move is not just a physical move. It means something. You will create something in your life. University students who are going to different cities, just moving is not just a physical move. Because you have made that choice to move there, you will create a new life there. And you have to think about it. And in your life, some of you may start a new job. The new job is not just a physically new job, but that will open up a new possibility, new opportunities, and you will create a new pattern in your life. You don't - you never know what that will lead to you.

Some of you may have made big failures, big mistakes and because of that you suffer quite a bit, but don't just feel bad about it. Because of those failures and mistakes, that might open up new possibilities and a new pattern of your life. Some of you may experience real hardship in life either because of your children or because of your parents, or because of life situations. You may go through really, really difficult time right now, but don't just think that, "Oh, I just hope that these difficult times go away." But instead of looking at it that way, when you look at carefully, "Hey, congratulations. Newlywed." You will create. You'll make a different person.

A Story to be Told

See, we don't think about these things, we just do activities for the sake of doing them without even thinking about them. Events are not as important as your understanding and interpretation of your events, because every event in your life will create a certain pattern in your life. When you look at it very carefully, you can make wiser decisions in your life. So look carefully at what happens in your life. I'm very excited because, in my whole life, life stories are being written, and I'm very excited about what my last chapter will be like. Oh, not yet, but still more chapters to go. What the last part of my chapter will look like, I'm very excited about that. And I hope that my last chapter will have a sudden exciting turnaround. Maybe a new revelation.

I don't know. It is what God, you know, does in my life. Your life is full of potential. Write a beautiful story with your life. Don't just write it a mediocre story like everybody does. A very unique story, I want you to write with your life. Be bold, be courageous, and do something unique to yourself, and to do that you have to see what happened so far and what that has guided you to. You have to understand that, you have to see that. Without seeing it, you cannot do this. So, don't live your life mindlessly. "Oh, just because I go to school, I study. Just because I studied, I graduate, and I get a job." This is what everybody does, but what is the unique thing that you want to do in your life? You can find that. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor said, "There is always a story to be told about how I had become what I am now and where my current journey will take me."

So, to live a meaningful life, events alone are not enough. You need your critical insights and understanding of the events. That's what you need. That's where the word of God comes in. The word of God is very much important in helping you have the critical insights about life. 1 Peter, let me

read, "You have been born anew, not of perishables but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God." So, you had been born anew, like a new identity is given, but in verse 24, he describes what reality is like, "For all flesh is like grass and all his glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

Reality

Yes, the reality is the grass withers and the flower falls. That is the reality. Our existence itself can be meaningless because it will decay and come to nothing, but that was not the conclusion of Peter's statement. His conclusion is that we are given a new identity by this eternal word, eternal truth. We are given a new what? What he's saying is that now, God gave us the word and through that word, we see our events. Through that word, through the eyes of that word of truth, we see our life. We don't see our life through the eyes of frail existence. We now see our life through the eyes of God's truth. Do you see your situation through your feeble, imperfect, and limited eyesight of yourself? Or do you see your situation through the eyes of the eternal word of the truth? The great thing about the word of God is it can change your eyesight. It can also shape your inner person with a strong perspective of courage and hope. Through the Bible, you can have courage and hope. What is really important is not our reality, but the inner reality that interprets our outer reality. What interprets our outer reality is my inner reality, and what strengthens my inner reality is the word of God.

Viktor Frankl, do you know Viktor Frankl? He went through the Nazi camps, and he really went through hell, and he said this, "No dream, no matter how horrible, could be as bad as the reality of the camp which surrounds us." The reality of the camp was this bad. I think I once explained to you as soon as they arrived, they came out from the train, they line up. Two lines. They tell you to choose a line. They don't know what to choose. One line they choose arbitrarily and that line goes to a gas chamber, and the other line luckily survived. That's how he survived. Every time, by what do I make a decision? By chance, I could be on the line that goes to the gas chamber or not. He said that was the cruellest reality he ever experienced, but he said this, "Even in this kind of camp, what kind of prisoner I became depended on my inner decision." Even in that cruellest reality, what kind of prisoner I become depended on their inner decision. I believe no matter how cruel your reality may be, what kind of person you will become depends on your inner decision, and that inner person's shape can be helped by the insight of the

word of God. That inner person needs to be strengthened so that we can persevere through all our difficult circumstances.

The real faith. The real faith does not produce optimism that negates the reality and escapes into fanaticism. Do you understand what I'm saying? The real faith does not produce optimism that negates the reality and escapes into fanaticism. The real faith does not produce pessimism that sees the naked reality and escapes into darkness. Let me read it again. The real faith does not produce pessimism that sees naked reality and escapes into darkness. So, the real faith does not create optimism that is just blind to the reality and then falls into a kind of fantasy. The real faith does not produce pessimism which closes its eyes to the further, the better life and just falls into darkness. The real faith produces courage that struggles with reality but always tries to see more than what you see on the surface. The real faith produces courage that struggles with reality but always tries to see more than what you see on the surface. My friends, take a bold stroke of your pen to write again the story of good news. When you read the Bible, they went through so many hardships, difficulties, and tremendous helplessness and despair. But even in that persecution, they wrote the story, and those stories are what? Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Even in the most difficult circumstances, they wrote the story of faith. They wrote the story of courage. They wrote the story of hope. And that story continues and that story was not just a story, that story was their life.

Reflection

I pray that we, St. Timothy people together write a beautiful story of hope, courage and faith so that other people read it, see it, get encouraged and empowered. I know you all go through a lot of life hardships that you cannot even share with others. I know a lot of you go through the inner turmoil that you cannot share with others, but all these things are not in vain. These things will work together to create your beautiful life. I know that you're beautiful. Life will be written out because God is with you. God who began a good work will bring it to completion. That's what I believe. Yes, in the past we've made mistakes. Yes, in the past we failed. Yes, in the past we did what we should not have done, or we didn't do what we should have done, but life is not over. Your story is not over. God will continuously help you understand and rewrite the story.

There's a very interesting fellow, Michael White. He was influenced by Michel Foucault, a philosopher. This Michael White guy says that a lot of psychological diseases happens because the story that they write is different from the life they lived. In other words, the distorted story is what they started writing. So he helps them to write a story again so that they can see their life in a more correct way. I think the correct way is a positive way. The way of hope, courage and faith.

So today I talked about Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. Different life stories. And tomorrow I'm going to tie up a little bit of those things together.

Meaning of Life: Part 2

[Link to the Audio Player](#)

Unique Stories

The Bible talks about life in a story form. Because the story continues, I think the Bible is so profound. That's why I love the Bible. I love the Bible because it has so much wisdom, so many secrets, so much truth in it. We examined three stories and then we realized that they're all different stories. Abraham's story is radically different from Jacob's story, and Jacob's story is radically from Joseph's story. So each person has a unique story and it's unique like all yours. All of your stories are unique stories.

Last night I heard that you had a good sharing. Some of you stayed up here until 1:30 and ate up four boxes of ramen. We got only six boxes left now, hurry up. I hope that this community is a place where we all come and share our life, without having to be so religious. Without having to express that you're so religious. That's a pseudo-community. I want a real community. Sharing of your shattered experiences, broken experiences. Just be who you are. If you're struggling with God, that's fine. If you're struggling with your faith, that's all right. That's all part of the process. You don't need to pretend to be somebody to be able to share. We all, if we can all share your stories, then together we can build an authentic community and that authentic community will have a powerful influence on you and on your children. This morning, I had a little time to talk with John Chung and I said, "You know, a first-generation community that they built - I mean I love the first generation all that, but I'm not very proud of the community that they've built. I'm not 100 percent really satisfied with the community they built, because the second generation cannot take it on. Somehow, they built their own very unique special community for themselves. It is not something the second generation can take on." But our church is unique because you're the pioneer. I don't see many second-generation communities around, even in Toronto or in North America. I went down to Hawaii and met all the second generation ministers, but there are not many second-generation communities. You are the pioneers. You are building up a community. I hope that you build an authentic community, not a pseudo-community. Where everybody is welcome and everybody can share their stories. Then you'll be powerful and

you will help your children. Once you build it, they can take it on. Build some kind of community where your children can also take on.

Knowing the Purpose of Life

Yesterday we reflected that I'm not just a passive recipient or victim to just live a life as my circumstances dictate. I'm the agent of making an intentional decision for my life. This story is not just being written, but I am also in a way with the help of God, the author of the story of my unique story that my life will write. Everything that is happening in your life, every single event, every single emotion that you feel are not just random things or meaningless things. I believe that they gathered together to create a stream of the river and in that way, we see the direction of our life. The purpose of our life.

Yesterday Laila came to me and asked me a question. Laila, you're a new person but you're always welcome to ask questions. She felt awkward too. Linda is from Ottawa, but Laila is from London. Laila asked me about the purpose and meaning of life, are they the same thing? Very, very good question. So I said the purpose is something that is a part of the meaning of life but it's not everything. As you live your life, then clearly you see the direction of your life and then you see the kind of end. So that's a purpose. The end too. So the direction is set. So you're not choosing arbitrarily the purpose, "Okay, this is the purpose in my life. I'm going to live like this." No, that's not what you do. As you see, you see your purpose in life being unravelled to you. So you see and you follow it. So she said, "So, in the middle of it, we just live it?" No, we don't just live it. We live it, but you open your eyes, so you see every single detail that is happening in your life and you see how they work together to build.

Yesterday I was going to drive up here because on Sunday - tomorrow, I have to go back down to the church to preach. So I was going to drive up, but I was so tired. As you get older, over 50, you tend to fall asleep behind the wheel. So I was kind of scared and then Jane kindly offered, "You know Pastor, why don't you just come up here and then you can go down. Grace can take other peoples in a ride and all that." So I came up. So driving and she asked me, "Okay, 404..." we were on the express, "Does this take you to 404?" So I said, "Okay yeah, both collector and express, they both take you to 404 so you can just stay here and then, you don't have to" and I kind of fell asleep, right? And after a while, I felt strange and I looked at, looked out and saw Kennedy. "Where are we?" She said, "But you said you don't

have to take 404, you just go all the way." She misunderstood me. "Aw, Kennedy. Oh no!"

"So okay, now we got to go out..." and we got off at Markham. It's like that, life. You know, if you don't see your option, you don't need to think about it. You can just live. Without knowing where you're going, if life is a journey, maybe you may end up with a place where you don't want to be, ultimately. So it is very important that you need to pay attention to what is going on in your life - daily or weekly or monthly or yearly. You need to think about where you're going and that set the pattern instead of letting the circumstances dictate and guide you to where you don't want to go. That's what I'm saying. You don't want circumstances to take you where you don't want to go. You want to go where you want to go. That's what we need to do.

Life Continuously Evolves

You know, some people after living so many years tell me that, "I feel like I'm being robbed of my life." After so many years they tell me, "I feel like I'm robbed of my life." You don't want to do that. You want to make an intentional choice every moment. So that's what we have been talking about yesterday. The meaning of life, it's not something outside of you. It's out there somewhere so I go and find it. The meaning of life is shaped in me. It's not something other people can give to me. If you come to me and say, "Mok-san-nim (Pastor), what is my meaning of life?" "Okay. This is your meaning of life, live it like this." Ethically wrong, that is ethically wrong. If I do that, no matter how powerful I may be, how spiritual I may be, that's ethically wrong to do so. But I see that happening in lots of places. Even to my kids, I cannot say that this is your meaning of life, you got to do this. I can't do that.

"Oh, you got to be a doctor" or "You're going to be a lawyer." Who said that that's a meaning of life for that person? I don't think even parents have that right to do so with their children. It is something that is being made, being shaped, and being formed. It is important that you understand it, that you know it. Over the years, it will be slowly revealing itself to you. Yesterday, so we did 'meaning of life - life itself has a pattern of the story' and we examined some stories in the Bible. The Bible never defines what life is. I'm really glad that the Bible never defined life because once you define something, that's the end. Closure. It's closed. But the Bible never defines. Life is not something that you can close. Life is something - until you die - it continuously evolves. There's a process continuously and it unravels itself.

From Bondage to Freedom

Anyway, now, these stories - every one of you has a different story, and in the Bible, there are many different stories, but I discovered that there is one common thread. There's one common thread that I found in all these stories - your stories, Bible stories - and the one common thread is that all our stories move from bondage to freedom. That's what I discovered. That's what I found. All our stories move from bondage to freedom. Abraham's story, Jacob's story, Joseph's story, they all moved from bondage to freedom. From the bondage of fear to the freedom of courage, the bondage of hatred to the freedom of love and forgiveness, from the bondage of greed to the freedom of self-sacrifices.

Our stories also moved from bondage to freedom, with the help of God's grace. But, another thing that I discovered was that this is the movement of the story, but in-between, there is suffering. The story from bondage to freedom is not a free ride. To move from bondage to freedom, you have to go through the reality of suffering. For example, Israelites, they were in Egypt and then Moses led them out of Egypt. Egypt represented what? Bondage. They were slaves there. They were moving out of bondage to the promised land. That's the Book of Exodus. To move from Egypt to the promised land, in-between, what was there? Wilderness. There was a wilderness. In other words, you will all go through a time of wilderness in your life. You cannot just enter into the promised land. I'm going to Israel this Fall. Palestine, Israel. But I heard that it takes only like a week or 10 days to go from Egypt to the promised land, but how long did it take? Forty years. Forty years of suffering. So if you think that you can have faith just like that, no.

Faith is something that is resulted after many, many years of disappointments, hardships, confusion, and all these things you go through, and after that, you enter into the world of faith. If you just grab it, it may be pseudo-faith. Be careful with that kind of faith. With pseudo-faith, be careful, because pseudo-faith will never liberate you. Pseudo faith will never take you to the promised land. It has to be real faith. The real faith, always in that life, there is suffering. Suffering is indispensable then, to find a meaning in life.

You don't need to choose, "Okay, then should I choose always, do I have to choose to suffer?" No, you don't need to choose because without your choice suffering will come to you. You are inescapable from suffering. The most common experience of human beings is not happiness, unfortunately, but

suffering. The universal experience of human beings is suffering. Each family has its own suffering. Every person, regardless of age, experiences, some kind of suffering they go through. So when you describe human beings, if you take out suffering, then you're not giving the full picture of human beings. What human beings truly are like. To be fully human is to experience suffering. In Christianity, we believe that God became a human being, and we call it incarnation. When God decided to become a human being, what was the one characteristic that God chose, that characteristic is suffering. The cross is a symbol of that. Jesus Christ took the suffering, as the face of a human being.

Gospel Mark describes it best. In the gospel of Mark, you find Jesus as the suffering servant. In Mark, Jesus kept emphasizing that I'm going to have to suffer. Every time he gathers disciples he says, "I'm going to have to suffer," and all that. And then they all didn't like it, "No, don't do that." They were interested in glory. They were interested in power. But suffering? Don't talk about it. But every time Jesus performed miracles, he said, "I have to be delivered and I will suffer" and all that. They didn't like it. Then Jesus asked Peter, "Who do people say that I am?" "Oh, Elijah and all that stuff." Then he asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter says, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." He answered it right, and after that, he said, "the son of God has to suffer" and all that. And Peter said, "No, no, no, no..." When you look at the Bible, very interesting. Peter used the word "rebuke". Peter rebuked Jesus, "Don't say things like that. Right now the atmosphere's so good, just lead them and let's take over the Romans. Everybody's excited about your message, everybody's excited about you, so let's go." But Jesus said, "I have to suffer." "Don't say that wimpy stuff, you're not going to suffer. You're going to win." And Jesus said, "Satan, get behind me." So he got really rebuked by Jesus, "Satan, behind me."

Perspective on Suffering

See, Jesus cannot do his ministry without suffering. Because suffering is a very core element of what a human being is like. Jesus Christ did not see suffering as a result of sin. Many times we think that suffering is a result of sin, but Jesus Christ had a different perspective on suffering. When he was walking with the disciples, and they met a born-blind man, and then the disciples asked what question, what did they ask? "Whose sin is this? Is it his sin or his parents' sin?" Jesus said, "No one's sin. This is to glorify God." Glorifying God, ultimately he healed the man. Glorifying God means from

bondage to freedom, from the bondage of blindness to the freedom of being able to see. Jesus Christ did not see suffering necessarily as a result of sin.

Actually, Douglas John Hall, who's a Canadian theologian who is teaching in Montreal at McGill. He said there were at least four different kinds of suffering, right from the beginning in creation. First, the suffering of loneliness. God created all things, and what did he say? "It is good." But when he saw Adam, what did he say? "It is not good for him to be alone." So from the beginning, there was evidence of suffering, of loneliness. Second, the suffering of one's own limitations. They all had to live with their own limitations. You know, one's experiencing one's limitation is hard to bear. We all struggle with that. At the job, whatever we do, especially men at the golf course, you'll experience a lot of limitations. If you go a lot you will learn about life. Suffer. Why do you pay to suffer? Interesting paradox. Third, the suffering of temptation. From the serpent, the first human beings experience the suffering of temptation. Jesus also experienced the suffering of temptation. Fourth, the suffering of fear. As a matter of fact, the first word human beings spoke to God was a message of fear. This is what he said: "I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid." That first phrase, human beings ever spoke to God, and they are expressing their fear. So all of these fears were there.

Pain is Part of Human Life

The suffering has always been with human beings right from the beginning until now. So when suffering comes to you, don't treat them as though an unexpected or uninvited guests came to you because suffering will inevitably come to you. There are a lot of people suffering around me, suffering from financial problems. I mean, a lot of people come to me and then tell me about their suffering. Some people have real problems with children, a kind of tough life their children go through. Suffering from illness, he's only two years older than me and he just got lung cancer, and so he's getting chemotherapy right now. Suffering from political oppression, from broken relationships, from one's own lack of capability, limitations, and difficult problems. From one's own mistakes, the gravest sin who's resulting cannot be undone. So from all these things, people suffer. If you are trying to achieve happiness without considering seriously the reality of suffering, it won't be true happiness.

There's a movie called *Shadow Lands*. How many people saw that? Good, yeah. *Shadow Lands* describes the life of C.S. Lewis. You know C.S. Lewis.

He was an atheist at first. He was a professor at Oxford University, but after he was converted he wrote many good Christian books. Some of you probably know some of his books. What was his book? Mere Christianity or Narnia is a children's story. All good books that he wrote. Then he married Joy Gresham. Joy was a divorcee from the United States and she came to London and married him. All his life, he was just a scholar living in an ivory tower. But soon after marriage, they discovered that she had cancer. In the late age, they weren't married for many years, just a few years while taking care of her. He experienced what it meant to truly love somebody.

But at the same time, he also experienced how painful that is to love somebody. Cancer really got worse. So once they went to their favourite spot in Hertfordshire in England - a beautiful rural area. Lewis really enjoyed the moment there. This is what he said to Joy, his wife: "This is my kind of happiness. When the present moment is entirely self-contained, untarnished by any fleeting thoughts of what has gone before or what may come later." He really enjoyed that moment. Then Joy, his wife, gently rebuked him, saying, "That's only temporal isolationism. The happiness cannot be genuine if it involves shutting off the past or the future. What is yet to come in the future infuses the very texture of what is now experienced. The pain then is part of this happiness now. That's the deal." And she died. Happiness cannot be contained in one good moment. That's temporal isolationism. After her funeral, Lewis said, "A child chooses safety, but a grown person," I used inclusive language, he said, "A grown man chooses to suffer. The pain is part of the happiness. Now I find I can live with the pain after all." That's the deal.

Pain is a part of happiness. Pain is a part of human life. Jesus came to this world not to get rid of suffering or pain. Jesus did not come to this world to give us a painkiller, but I see many people try to use Christian faith only as a painkiller. Whenever they are suffering, they go to church and get comforted just for the moment. Then they need stronger and stronger dosage of that painkiller. That's why Karl Marx said, "Religion is opium."

Avoiding Suffering

Jesus Christ did not come to take us out of the world of suffering. We can see that in Jesus' last prayer. This was Jesus' last prayer: "I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but I asked you to protect them from the evil one." Jesus did not come to take us out of the world, but to protect us

from the evil one. Jesus did not say, "My children, since I'm with you, you'll have no pain anymore." Jesus didn't say that. Jesus said rather, "In the world, you may have tribulation." Tribulation is worse suffering. But he said, "In the world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer." Be of good cheer, meaning have courage. You will have suffering but have courage. But we human beings are not courageous when it comes to suffering. We are not courageous when we face our suffering, we try our best to avoid suffering as much as possible, and if the suffering is inevitable, we wish that that suffering would go away as soon as possible.

That's all we want. We feel so helpless and powerless when it comes to our suffering. We only fear our suffering. We're only thinking of running away from our own suffering, and our life becomes so passive and meaningless. Also, when the suffering comes, not only do we try to avoid it, but we try to find a scapegoat - someone to blame. Don't we do that? When we go through suffering, "Ugh, if my parents sent me to this university or that university." Or if you're fighting, "Ugh, if I didn't meet that woman or that man." So when suffering comes, we always tend to blame somebody. When Japanese cars first came to the United States, many American motor factories had to close their doors. There was a Chrysler Factory in Detroit that had to be shut down. Ronald Evans was a supervisor at one of those factories and got laid off. On June 19, 1982, Vincent Chin had a bachelor party and on the way home he dropped by at McDonald's, and Ronald Evans and his stepson approached Vincent and the stepson grabbed him from behind and Ronald beat Vincent to death with a baseball bat. And he said, "Because of you, Jap, we lost our job." Vincent was not even Japanese. He was Chinese. Chin is not a Japanese last name.

Sometimes we try to find somebody to blame for our suffering. We're not bold and courageous with our suffering. So one, we run into fantasy. Two, we blame somebody. Three, none of that works, then we fall into despair and bitterness. That's what we do. We are not of good cheer. The worst feeling of suffering, you know what that is? The worst of all the suffering is the feeling that God has abandoned you. That's the worst feeling of suffering. All another suffering, yeah we can handle, but if you feel that God does not love you any more or God has abandoned you, that is the worst feeling of suffering. That's why Jesus Christ experienced the worst feeling of suffering on the cross. What did he say? "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?" That's the worst feeling of suffering and our Lord Jesus Christ experienced that.

Job's Suffering

The Bible is a story, and then to talk about suffering, the Bible gives us another story, and that story is the story of who? Job. Job is the classic example of suffering, but I believe that there is a message that God wants to get across through the story of the life of Job. Some of you probably know, but how many of you never heard of Job?

Job lived all his life with so many of God's blessings. He had many children and they were all good and he was rich and healthy and he was even righteous before God. He was almost an ideal person. People wish that that was the end of Job's life and he lived happily ever after. That's not the story of the Bible. It's a story of a fairy tale, but the Bible story doesn't end in that way. He didn't live happily ever after, that was not the case. The Satan challenged God. Here the Satan is not the devil, Satan does not refer to the Devil. It means, DA or prosecutor. It says "The" Satan, so DA or prosecutor. The Satan challenged God saying that Job is loyal to you, not for no reason. The reason he's loyal to you is that in Job's mind, implicitly he believes that his loyalty will guarantee his blessings. It is Job's careful calculation, he said.

The challenge is that human beings worship God for what they receive from God. Not for who He is. It's not pure love between God and human beings. The reason human beings are good is that they are scared of God's punishment or because they are expecting God reward, that's all. All they want is to either avoid your punishment or expecting your reward. That's why they worship you, not for who You simply are. That's the challenge. So this whole story of Job is a challenge to the traditional view of life. What is the traditional view of life? I think the writer of Job is a radical person. He turned upside down the traditional logic that God blesses those who are good to him. Wow that's amazing, that's how most people think - God blesses those who are good to him. The story of Job challenges that. Job, even though he was good, experienced tremendous suffering. It is hard to accept the story of Job and the message of Job. Even though it is in the Bible, you wish that it never happens to you. You wish that the Satan never tells God that these things should happen to me. We don't want that kind of tragedy that happened to Job to happen to us. When bad things happen, we still wonder whether we did anything wrong.

Shattering Fantasies

Once Helen came to me and told me Peter went golfing on Sunday and he did really bad. She said to him, "See, if you miss church, that's what happens." Don't go play on Sunday, missing worship service. Go after. We still think that when bad things happen, automatically we think that we must have done something wrong, or somebody did. That's why we feel guilty. When something bad or suffering happens to us, we feel guilty. Harold Christener talks about a family in his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. It's a pretty good book if you haven't read it, it's a very old book, but it's a pretty good book if you want to read it. A 19-year-old girl, in his synagogue, he is a rabbi, suddenly collapsed at her school. So a doctor came, but by the time the parents arrived, she had already died. She was only 19 years old. So the 19-year-old girl, she died, and after the funeral, the parents came to Harold and said, "Rabbi, at the last Yom Kippur, we didn't fast." They were saying that if they fasted at the last Yom Kippur, their daughter, would have survived, or nothing bad would have happened to her if they fasted at the last Yom Kippur. The Book of Job challenges the naive idea that 'if I'm good, bad things will never happen to me'. That's a fantasy. Morality and religion can be also another form of fantasy. People who go through suffering can create fantasy because it's so hard to bear, so they create a fantasy. And this is what Nietzsche said: "The true meaning of life is too terrible for us to cope with, which is why we need our consoling illusions if we are to carry on." The Bible shatters all these fantasies. It is people who make a fantasy from the Bible, but the Bible shatters all kinds of fantasies. All of Job's fantasies are shattered.

Ask God to Be on Your Side

The worst of all Job's suffering, what did I say? The worst of all suffering is what? To feel that God has abandoned you. This is Job's confession. He said, "For the arrows of the Almighty are in me. My spirit drinks their poison. The terrors of God are arrayed against to me." This is what Job said. He felt that not only was he abandoned by God, not only was God not on his side, but God attacked him. In another place, "If I sin, what do I do to you? You watcher of humanity. Why have you made me your target? Why have I become a burden to you?"

Isn't it really cool, the Bible? They're not just talking about good things. You don't know, not even ten percent of what the Bible really says. This is a real

confession of a human being. He feels that God is not on his side, that God had abandoned him. Not only abandoned him, He made him His target. That, as I said, is the worst feeling of suffering. All kinds of suffering are fine, but that feeling that God is not on your side, that is the worst feeling. You know, real courage - I said when it comes to suffering, people are not courageous - but real courage is when we suffer. When we lost everything, we still accept that God is on our side. That is real courage. When you lost everything, when you failed at everything, and even then you believe that God is on your side. That's courage. That's hard to accept. When suffering comes, that's really hard to accept. In Romans 8, St. Paul said, "If God is for us, who is against us?" In other words, St. Paul experienced, in the most difficult time of suffering, he felt that God was for him. God was on his side. "Who will be against me?" That's what he's saying. If God is for me, who is against me? That's courage for me. And then a little bit later he said, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Even death cannot separate us from the love of God."

It was difficult for Job to accept this. You know, all his friends - sometimes friends are limited - all friends came to Job to console him and to help him. But what they actually did was they threw him into deeper despair by continuously saying that 'You must have done something wrong. These kinds of things don't happen to anyone if you didn't do anything wrong'. They throw him into deeper despair by saying that. So when you meet friends, when you counsel somebody, be careful. Instead of helping them, you might throw them into a deeper despair. What are they implying? They're implying that 'God is not on your side'. Don't misunderstand. God is not on your side. They want to continually assure Job that God was not on his side.

Martin Buber, a Jewish theologian said, "When we pray, we don't ask God for anything. We simply ask God for God. We invite God into our lives." I think that's the best prayer. We simply ask God to be on our side. We simply ask God to be with us. Don't ask for anything, just ask God to be with you and on your side. When we suffer, the only prayer we need is that God is on our side. That's why Jesus said before he left the world, "I'll be with you forever." Jesus promised that he will be with us forever. In other words, 'in all circumstances, I'll be on your side. You are my child'. Would you ever give up your children because they are the worst criminal? Would you do that? No. Jesus says, "You are my child. I'll never abandon you." When you read the Prodigal Son, when the son left - I mean, you can't do anything about it, when they leave, they leave. But you always wait. You always wait. You never forget them. You never abandon them.

God's Compassion is Beyond Our Comprehension

You know, I found something wonderful about suffering. When suffering comes to us, it strikes us at the very core of our existence. Do you see this bruise? This kind of bruise is nothing, right? Pain on a part of your body is all right, but when the suffering hits the core of your existence, it hurts. When it takes away your dignity and everything that you believe, when it takes it away, it hurts. Pain hurts. That is really hurting. This is not hurting. That is real pain. When suffering hits us, it hits us in every aspect of our lives. Because it hits the core and every aspect of our lives. What I discovered, there's one more thing that suffering hits, do you know what that is? Suffering hits the compassion of God. When it hits us at the very core, it also hits the compassion of God. And when the compassion of God is hit by our suffering, His grace is released. It's like running, you know. I enjoy running these days. If you run, in the beginning, it's really hard, but after a while it hits something and some good hormone is released and you feel good after that. In the same way, when suffering hits us, it hits us hard and at the very core but also hits God's compassion. And when God's compassion is hit, the grace of God is released.

You know the word compassion? What is compassion? Compassion is love, right? But that word is a combination of come and passion. Come is together, passion is suffering. The passion of Jesus Christ is the suffering of Jesus Christ. So, the word compassion is special love. It's not just romantic love, it's suffering love. So I translate that as suffering love. Compassion is suffering love. It's a very, very special love. When suffering hits us, it hits God's compassion, and when God's compassion is hit, then the grace of God is released. We don't always experience this God's suffering love. When we go through suffering, you realize all of a sudden it's there. I never knew this grace of God, but when you go through suffering, you find that it's there. Suffering takes away everything from us, but it makes God's grace and compassion available to us. When we have this compassion, when we experience this compassion, then you can have compassion for others. When you don't experience this compassion, you cannot have compassion for others. But when you go through suffering and he experienced His grace and experience God's compassion, then you can identify with others suffering. Then you become a compassionate person.

Without compassion, I think every human being will be hardened. So hardened, nothing will break them. So suffering does something very good.

It makes us weak, but at the same time, it makes us compassionate. We can overcome our self-centeredness and understand others' suffering. Understand others' suffering. I think Job's friends did not understand Job's suffering. Understanding and comprehension are two different things. The word comprehend comes from 'comprehendere', a Latin verb. It means to grasp. Seize. Wrapping our minds around something so as to your understanding, like you grab it. So when you use the saying "Oh, now I grasped..." it's comprehending it. Comprehending is to put things in your grasp and know what kind of understanding is the understanding of Job's friends. With their limited knowledge, they tried to comprehend what happened to Job, but they were all wrong. So in the end, they were all punished by God. Not punished but rebuked by God.

Robert Browning's poem, Andrea del Sarto, says "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's heaven for?" Our reach should exceed our grasp. Your life is not in your grasp, and suffering tells us that. How can we understand God's creation by grasping it? I think Michelangelo is a genius, he does as a few other things with other pictures too, but with this picture - look at that hand, Adam and God - their fingers don't meet. Their hands - it's not grasping it, it's kind of reaching out. Reaching out, but as you look at carefully who's more urgent in reaching out? I think God, God is much more urgent in reaching out. So our life is not like grasping. We try to grasp and put everything in our control, but reaching out that is true understanding. Sometimes suffering is hard to grasp, hard to understand, but there is God's compassion working beyond our comprehension.

Stand Tall Before the World

Job's conclusion comes in chapter 38. In chapter 38, as you might expect, maybe you think that God will just give an answer. "Okay, this is my answer. One, two, three, four." No, this is what God said:

Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

"Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge?
Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.

“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?

Tell me, if you understand.

Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!

Who stretched a measuring line across it?

On what were its footings set,

or who laid its cornerstone—

while the morning stars sang together

and all the angels shouted for joy?

“Who shut up the sea behind doors

when it burst forth from the womb,

when I made the clouds its garment

and wrapped it in thick darkness,

when I fixed limits for it

and set its doors and bars in place,

when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther;

here is where your proud waves halt’?

“Have you ever given orders to the morning,

or shown the dawn its place,

that it might take the earth by the edges

and shake the wicked out of it?

The earth takes shape like clay under a seal;

its features stand out like those of a garment.

The wicked are denied their light,

and their upraised arm is broken.

“Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea

or walked in the recesses of the deep?

Have the gates of death been shown to you?

Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness?

Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth?

Tell me, if you know all this.

“What is the way to the abode of light?

And where does darkness reside?

Can you take them to their places?

Do you know the paths to their dwellings?

Surely you know, for you were already born!

You have lived so many years!

“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow
or seen the storehouses of the hail,
which I reserve for times of trouble,
for days of war and battle?
What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed,
or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth?
Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain,
and a path for the thunderstorm,
to water a land where no one lives,
an uninhabited desert,
to satisfy a desolate wasteland
and make it sprout with grass?
Does the rain have a father?
Who fathers the drops of dew?
From whose womb comes the ice?
Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens
when the waters become hard as stone,
when the surface of the deep is frozen?

Job answered, ‘what are you talking about? I went through so much, what does that mean?’. I think there's a wisdom there. God brings Job out and to see the whole world that He has created. You see it? Do you understand it? Have you gone into the foundation of the earth? Have you gone down to the ocean? Do you know all that? He shows that. You know, when we go through suffering, what do we do? We become withdrawn into our own small world. Why do these things happen to me? Why to me, not to her or to him? Me, me, me... we become so self-centred, we are kind of locked up in our small world and we cannot even move. At the end, suffering paralyzes us. God brings Job out of that small world, opens the world for him. See, now you stand tall before the world. This is what I created and you I will never be abandon. As I take care of this gigantic universe I will take care of you.

Here I am God

Interesting word in Hebrew is called Hinenu. Hinenu is 'here we are'. Hineni, with an I, is here I am, Hinenu is here we are. When God called Abraham, Abraham said: "Hineni, here I am." When Samuel was called four times, and then when God calls Samuel goes and says, "Hineni, here I am." When Isaiah experienced God's presence in the temple, he said, "Woe to me, I'm a man of unclean lips and I saw the living God." And then God sent charcoal

and he cleansed lips and then after that God said, "Whom shall I send?" And then Isaiah said "Hineni, here I am. Send me." That's Hineni. I think that's the answer to our suffering. When God's grace hits us, now instead of running away into our own small world we come out, and God brings us out and lets us stand tall.

Hineni. Here I am. Nothing will destroy me. Nothing in this world can destroy me because God is on my side. Hineni, spirituality. Hinenu, spirituality. No matter how much suffering I may go through, I will stand tall. I will not be scared. I will not run away into fantasy. I will not run away into our own small world. I will stand tall. No matter how difficult our suffering may be, God will be with you. In the world, you may have tribulation, but be of good cheer. Have courage, and stand tall. Come out. Don't lock yourself in that small world where you're suffering and licking your wounds. Licking wounds in that small world will not help. Knowing that God is on your side, come out and stand tall. God will move you into the next stage of your life.

Meaning of Life: Part 3

[Link to the Audio](#)

Bondage to Freedom

Last night, I mean this is the last night here, we were talking about the topic from bondage to freedom and one of the viewers after the lecture came to me and asked what does freedom look like? This is when some people might think, bondage to freedom, it just happens. No, this whole process probably continues until we all die. The difference is the whole spectrum here, but whatever you've been enslaved to before, you're completely controlled by that. Then as you move along towards freedom, what used to control you, does not control you anymore. You know that. You have better control over it than when you were being completely controlled by it. For example, materialism. Before people were completely controlled by materialistic attitude and if someone doubted you, you couldn't survive. While having materialistic power, you might feel like you have control, but you actually start losing control, you lose freedom. You lose your freedom but if you start moving away from materialism you become freer. Once you become totally free, materialism doesn't bother you anymore, and so that kind of movement from bondage to freedom does not give you full satisfaction. At one point you realize that you know that it doesn't help you, but you do it anyway because you're so controlled by it. So, in that way, little by little, after a while you have enough empowerment and freedom to be able to say no. At one point, you say "no, I'm not going to let it totally control my life", but some sinfulness controls you. Same thing.

Meaning of Life

Do you understand? This is a process we are entering. If we go over the last two lectures a bit, the first one we said "The life you are, is who you are because of all the things that happened to you before. Every event, emotion and everything that happened in your life shaped who you are". The meaning of life cannot be found in general terms. Meaning of life has to be understood in a very, very specific form. It is something that is being formed, made, shaped and it's continuously being shaped until you die. The meaning of life is not finished, you will discover the meaning of life much more deeply as years go by and the purpose will become clearer and clearer. That's what's

happening in your life, meaning it is important for you to really pay attention to everything that is going on in your life, even though that can scare you.

Negative Value

Sometimes negative events make you believe that even the negative events will not crush you to the point of being destroyed. I believe that God who began good work in you will bring it to completion. I believe that even the negative things, will help the meaning of life be shaped and formed within you. So no matter what kind of events happen to you, that itself does not have value, but what it does in the future changes the value. For example, something very negative happened to you and you feel that “oh, this really destroyed me”. You feel that you’re not going to go any further in life because of this. At that point, if you don't go anywhere, yes, that negative thing that happened to you has a negative value and it really destroyed you, but let's say because of the negative things, you were turned around. Then later, you use the negative events for new realization, understanding and transformation. Then the value of the negative things change, it helps you become a better you. I believe that whatever happened to you, you are not just passive victims of it. You can turn it around and then you are the agent of creating new life within you.

Your Story

So the first night we studied different stories, everybody writes a different story. We are not on a conveyor belt. We all make different stories, we all write different stories. We examined Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, all Bible figures, but their life is radically different from one another. We recognize how unique each person's life is, in that same way everyone's story is different, and you're the only one who can write your story. You don't need to follow other people's story. Each person has a unique story, but there is a common thread in each story, and that common thread is all the stories move from bondage to freedom. That's the story of God. All your stories move from bondage to freedom, and I pray that it becomes your story, and I hope that you continue to work towards that.

Suffering in Life

In between from bondage to go to freedom, there must be suffering. For example, you’re on this mountaintop, but you see another mountaintop and you think “I want to go to that mountaintop”, but the thing is you must go

down the valley without going down the valley. Meaning you can not go to that mountain top. So, this suffering is necessary and an inevitable part of human life. If you define human beings without explaining the suffering aspect of human life, you cannot define what human beings are like. So that's why when God becomes a human being, Jesus took the form of suffering. Gospel Mark says, "suffering servant", meaning suffering is very much a part of who we are. When suffering comes to us, suffering strikes us at the core, that's why it's scary.

Suffering does not just hurt you, it really hit the core and every aspect of our life, but suffering also strikes something else. What does it strike? It strikes the compassion of God. The grace of God is released and that's what suffering does. So, when you experience suffering, you also experience God's grace and you'll become compassionate. Compassion is a unique kind of love, it is not romantic love, it is suffering love. compassion is suffering. So, when you suffer from somebody and have compassion for somebody, that's what compassion is. That suffering makes us compassionate in some ways.

Three Elements Within a Meaningful Life

For life to be meaningful, there must be at least three elements. One, there must be something you're passionate about. For life to be meaningful, there must be something that your passionate about, whatever it is. Two, not only do you need to have a passion for it, you must also actively engage in it. You must do something about it. In other words, It does not matter if you have a great passion for something but don't do anything about it. That's not a meaningful life. Third, while we pursue something, we must have an objective value. In other words, it needs a value not just for yourself, but for more than yourself. It must be of value to other people. These are the three elements that meaningful lives look like. I want you to reflect on that.

Elbert Camille, in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, described the absurdity of human life in this way. The myth of Sisyphus says that "A man rolls a stone up to the top of the mountain. When he reaches the top, the stone rolls back down to the bottom and then he rose back up again, struggling and goes up to the top and it rolls back down". Not just once or twice, but perpetually, he does that. That was his punishment. He describes human life like that. Sisyphus continuously rolls up the stone, but at the end what we see is the stone at the bottom of the mountain, meaning he needs to go down again. I think he critically assessed the meaninglessness of modern life well. A

meaningful life is not just fulfilling our function in a given system. Just because you do very well in fulfilling the function in that given system, doesn't mean you are living a meaningful life. Other people may praise you, your coworkers praise you, but that itself is not a meaningful life. A meaningful life is not just fulfilling given function in a given system.

My mother used to work for Tillys Wallet Factory. All Day she stands in front of the conveyor belt every day, the same thing, nothing changes. Monday she goes to work at 8:00 and stays there until 4:00 in the afternoon, then comes home and the next day she goes there again. Same thing, same place, same people doing the work. That's not really a meaning life or a meaningful job.

On Thursday I went to see a doctor about the retinal tear I had. More sophisticated job, but it was much different from the assembly line. People are waiting in the waiting room like a product on a conveyor belt and I was waiting there too until the doctor calls me in. He puts eye drops and goes out for 20 minutes saying, "I'll call you". So, I'm left with my pupils big and he calls me back two minutes later, he sees me and says "You're fine". Cool, that's a more sophisticated job, but not much different. A meaningful life is more than work. We must find something we are passionate about. It can be work, but it doesn't have to be. We must think about what we truly value in our life.

Nietzsche said, "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how". If you have a why to live for you can bear almost any how. I believe that. Oh yeah, when I looked at biblical figures, I realized one common thing, they all had a very clear why to live. For example, when I see Saint Paul, he had a clear why for a living. You may not necessarily like the life of Saint Paul, but he has a clear why. These are his words, "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as the law, a Pharisee as a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of knowing Christ Jesus". Paul was describing the most ideal person at the time. It would be like describing a very successful graduate of Harvard University with many credentials to his/her name.

He's narrating, and he says that whatever gains I had, I have come to regard this loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as a loss because of the surpassing value. He found the value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for his sake. I have suffered the loss of all things and I regard them as rubbish. I want to know Christ, the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death. If somehow, I am able to attain the resurrection from the dead. Why I'm saying that I'm not going to explain today, is because from July when we have power study, we are going to study Philippians. I am going to explain all that later, but at least hear what I want you to see. He has a clear why. You may not understand why he has that, why? but he has a clear why. How about Jesus? When you look at Jesus' life, do you think that he had a clear why? He said this, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly". Therefore, he came to the world to give us abundant life. That was his why, "I have come to the world to give your life, and life abundantly". Jesus came to give people this why Nietzsche was talking about. To do that, he even chose death. A person who has a good reason to live also has a good reason to die for. The person who has a good reason to live has a good reason to die for.

What Controls Human Life?

Freud and Adler were two very famous individuals who mentioned two important factors that control human life. Freud said that we human beings are living for sex. We are obsessed with sex. Everything relates to sex. Even your hard work for a job is to do with sex. Everything he explained either unfulfilled sex or sexual desire, are oppressed and repressed. All these things come out because of your desire for sex, I see some point there. When you look at the modern world, we are obsessed with sex. Any commercial you see, even for shaving cream displays this. But the ridiculous thing is, it promotes the message that "if you have this, you'll be sexy". You know everything is about sex, I understand that I see that in the world. Alder said, "no, not just for sex". Human beings basically pursue power, that's what they want. Power, that's what we want, that's what we need, but they are connected. If you have power, you can have sex too right? I mean, I'll always see the two as connected. So, they both correctly understood it in their own ways.

Though I believe that people do not just live for sex and power, people live for meaning. People search for meaning. I said the meaning can't be general. It is different for each person, for each person the meaning of life is unique.

We must find that unique passion for our own lives. As you look back, what have you struggled so much for? Maybe when you look at that theory carefully, maybe there's something that you tried to achieve and that is the something that you want to achieve? You might have never articulated what that is, but I think it is important that you try to articulate it even though it is difficult. Little by little, articulate what you truly value, what really gives you energy, excitement and makes you passionate. What is that? What is one thing that you want to do in your life? At the end of it, you may not say my life is robbed. You might not have had the chance to think about it lately, because you're so caught up in your work or too busy or even too lazy to think, but I think it is helpful for you to sit down and reflect on what it is that you want to do with your life, that makes your life unique. Robert Frost said in his poem, "The road not taken is the end part. Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less travelled by and that made all the difference". The reason he took the road less travelled by, was what? What is he talking about? suffering? challenge? He took it because it is the road only he could take, not the road that everyone else takes, but the road that he must take. That's what he means, I think, but I don't really know. I'm interpreting it for myself, it makes sense doesn't it? The road less travelled by, he didn't follow the popular road but followed the road that he had to take. It's something unique to him.

Jesus said something very similar, What did he say? Take the what road? Narrow road. He's not just talking about a difficult life. He's talking about the road that You need to take, and I call that authentic life. We are called to live an authentic life, not just a popular life, not just the life that other people are taking. I want to take my life, I want to take my road. That's what authentic life is and we need to take that authentic life that is less travelled by and that is narrow, and find meaning, you can find it there. They're within general life, you can't find it. We don't walk the road just because it's there. We don't walk the road because everybody else takes that road. We take our road and we intentionally choose which road to take. There are roads that come off as beautiful and glamorous, but may not be your road. If you take the road that is not yours, you will become miserable.

Life's Potential

There's a Korean movie called *pacemaker*, how many of you have seen the movie? It's the movie that moved me, it may not be the most well-made movie and some scenes are a little cheesy, but it's still the movie that moved

me. The first time I heard the word pacemaker, I found out that in a marathon they are the people who make the pace for the main runner-up to 30 kilometres. After 30 kilometres they don't need to run, their job is done. Their job is running for the main runner and after 30 kilometres they don't even run, some don't even finish the race. They don't run for themselves, they run for the main runner. The main character in that movie is a pacemaker. He never lived a passionate life, even though he was very talented. He just had to do his best up to 30 kilometres and that's it. His younger brother though hated the fact that his brother could do much better but didn't. He knew that his brother had so much talent from when they were young and poor. So there was a scene where there was a running competition. The first place prize was expensive items, they didn't really care about that. The second place prize was multiple boxes of ramen. They were so poor and so hungry and thought that they must win the boxes of ramen. They wanted the ramen so they agreed to sign up. So, the man runs, he can't run too fast, nor can he run too slow, meaning he had to make the perfect pace, and so he made a sign. When his younger brother opens the umbrella, he speeds up, when the umbrella closes, he slows down. That's how in the end they won the race and earned the ramen. Finally, at the end of the movie, the older brother runs in the London Olympics as a pacemaker. The younger brother, however, was so disappointed that he said he could not come to the competition to see his brother running. After running 30 kilometres, it was time for him to stop, but somehow this time he wanted to run for himself, not for anybody else. So, he continued, but his body condition was not fit for more than 30 kilometres. So, he ended up falling and struggled to get back up, but in that state of struggle he saw his brother standing in the crowd and all sudden he was energized. At that moment, the younger brother opened the umbrella, that is when I cried. You know, as I got older, I started to cry a lot. Anything a little cheesy, makes me cry. Anyways, so he opened the umbrella and started running and won the race.

My friends, how often do we live our lives like a pacemaker. Instead of living life fully to it's potential, we set our boundary and don't even think about going further. This is good. If I have a secure job, I can eat. I can die, have enough money and live a mediocre life. Moses refused to respond to God's call. How many times do you live life as a pacemaker? Not running for yourself, but running for you. When you have something you're passionate about, find it. When you don't know what it is, find it. What makes you excited? If you don't have something, what is life? If you don't have something you're passionate about, what is life? Second, not only do you need to find passion in life, you

must actively engage in it once. Do you know it? Once you know what you're passionate about, do something about it. Don't just sit on it.

Last week, I decided to start something, I took out the flute again and decided to learn jazz flute. I don't have time to take lessons, so I bought a book with a CD, and then going from one chapter to another I practiced. I'm not good, but I'm doing something about it. You get up and do something about it. We keep ourselves to do something about it, decide and act on it. Endless effort never gives up.

Having Courage and Faith

I believe that courage and faith, they go together. The disciples, after finding the true meaning of life, they threw away their net concretely. They did something that was courageous and faithful. Abraham, when he was called, he left his hometown. That's courage and that's faith. Moses, when he was called, he was ridiculed by old men to go into Egypt with the staff and fight against the organized systematic army, he did something about it. David with a stone, went out to fight against Goliath. Martin Luther King Jr. went out on the street to protest the racism. They all did something, that's faith and that's courage.

Courage is not the absence of fear. Faith is not the absence of doubt. Having courage and faith is not about living in denial of reality or living in a fantasy. We always stand before the reality that makes us fear and doubt. Do you think courageous people never feel fear? They always feel fear. Do you think that those who have faith, never doubt? They always doubt. But the crucial difference is, when they see fear and doubt, instead of turning their eyes away, they head straight into the face of fear, refusing to be intimidated by it. That's what true courage is. Yes, when you enter fantasy, you don't even see the fear, you don't even feel the fear. Yesterday, Lily sammonim asked about the definition of faith. Canadian theologian, Dr. Halls seeing God in human suffering said, "Faith is not a shallow optimism which closes his eyes to the data of despair to maintain itself intact. Faith is not on the other hand, on equally shallow pessimism which refuses to perceive even mystery let alone meaning and beyond the fate of mortal flesh whose beauty face, whose life withers the grass".

Jesus saw the reality of this world as naked as it is. It's absurdity, Jesus saw and observed. Jesus clearly saw the absurdity of human behaviours. In

contradiction, he saw hopelessness and pain, but he didn't fall into pessimism. He was sad, he was in agony and was angry, but he never ran away, never escaped into fantasy. He embraced the world, the world full of thorns, trusting in God's mystery. He embraced the world full of thorns. Faith encourages and even embraces failures. Embrace despair, embrace powerlessness, embrace uncertainty and embrace our doubts. Always hope, always wait and pursue while embracing all that, and you will never lose hope.

Do you have the courage to embrace yourself not because of the great achievements you make, but because of the many failures you made? I'm saying something very important here, not because of your great achievement, but because of your failures. That's the good news, God embraces you not because you're perfect. God knows that you are not, but God still embraced you, although you're broken in many ways. These two are very, very different. We embrace our life not because everything is going well, although there are many problems and difficulties we must resolve. We embrace our life not because we see clearly the bright future, but it's part of the fact that your life is uncertain. If you embrace your life because of something, when that something is taken away, you have no more life. If you are happy because you have lots of money, if that money is taken away, your happiness is gone with it. But if you are happy although you don't have money, even if that money is taken away, you are still happy. Embrace yourself not because you made it perfect, but because of the fact that you made many failures. That's what God did and that's the gospel. That's the good news.

Among the books I read, I have encountered this title, *I'm well apart from the fact that I have cancer*. Interesting book title. Her name is Hattie Carroll. She's a philosopher who went to the doctor and was told "You only have 10 years to live", and from that point on she started reflecting on her life and she wrote that book. Despite the fact that, I have only 10 years to live, I'm not going to let that crush me down. I'm going to live happily although I have only 10 years to live. If you learn to live your life despite anything, then you're very strong. Engage life's pursuit of what you have a passion for. It's not easy my friends. That's why people don't do anything about it, even though they have passion, it's not easy. There are many frustrations, doubts, failures and even despairs. Through those times, we may feel like giving up, that is why we need faith and courage.

Life Full of Appetite

Gerald's Jensen introduced another interesting Hebrew word and that is nephesh. You read it as "net fish." The meaning or the original word means life. It also has the meaning of appetite. When the scripture says the "Job lost everything because of his life". He uses the word nephesh here. He had a physical life, but he lost a nephesh. It's very interesting because the Korean language has two words for it too. For example, moksum (목숨) and sungmyeong (순면). Moksum is a physical breath or physical life. Sungmyeong is nephesh. When you look at Genesis Chapter two, verse seven, "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils. The breath life and the man became a living being". It is nephesh. It's not just I'm alive, it's a living being with full of appetite, life without nephesh, is not real life. Life without full of appetite is not real life. I see a lot of people living their lives without appetite, without nephesh. Lives without nephesh should be restored.

Do you know Naomi? You know, Naomi, right? A Bible figure. She was an immigrant woman, who immigrated to another country, Moab. She's an Israelite who had lost her husband, two sons and lost everything in her life. She had to come back to her homeland and this is what she said, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty, has dealt bitterly with me". Naomi is sweet, Mara is bitter. Naomi lost her appetite, but at the end her nephesh, she was restored through Ruth. I believe that God can restore our nephesh. That's when we become more than a mechanical being. Not only do you have a passion, but you fully engaged in your life, living out your passion.

Finally, while we pursue it, passion must have an objective value. No matter how passionately Hitler might have engaged in what he believed in, I can't say his life was meaningful. No matter how successful you may be, if it is only for your own selfish greed and glory, I can't say that it is a meaningful life. What we pursue must be for more than me. Jesus Christ did not die on the cross for his own glory, he did that to give us the abundant life. Real meaningful life is possible only when you go beyond your self-absorption. We must find something that we are passionate about, but that's something that must be more than just for myself, my family and friends. For example, helping at Evangel hall, it's more than myself leading BOM, serving at Teasdale. It doesn't have to be just church work. Even in your career, you

can build a meaningful life. Help the younger ones or help the new immigrants.

I can't tell you specifically what meaningful life is, but I told you generally about three categories, having passion, active engagement and having an objective value. As you look at these three categories, how would you see your life? You may have all the resources already. You just need to be more mindful of constructing a meaningful journey of your life. If you have money, then use it for a good purpose. If you have talent, use it for a good purpose. If you have time, use it for others. Meaning of life is not out there for you to go out and grab it. Meaning of life is made, formed and shaped within your life. You may not need to change anything, or maybe a simple attitude adjustment is needed. God does not move our story from bondage to freedom for ourselves. God does that so that you may help others move from bondage to freedom. When God first called Abraham, what did he say? "I will bless you so that you can live happily ever after", but He said, "I'll bless you so that you may bless others". That's the meaning of life. God blessed you so that you may bless others, as we live our meaningful life.

Our Story

You know, our stories will be weaved together, shaping the liberating story of life from bondage to freedom. The present structure of life will not blindly dictate our life, but our stories together will create a new pattern of living from bondage to freedom. We are creative agents of creating life with the help of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We don't do that alone, we do it together. We don't need a hero, we need each other. We need to share our stories with each other, and these stories will empower us. Among you, I hope that wonderful stories may come out. God has blessed you with so many talents and resources. I hope that you may be creative agents using your resources to bless others so that we may hear the story from bondage to freedom not only in you but through you, in other people. God bless you and live a meaningful life. I hope that this has helped you all to reflect upon the meaning of life.



Journey to Fullness

Rev. In Kee Kim

Journey to Fullness: Part 1

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

It's wonderful to have you here. This is our sixth retreat on the happiness seminar, so as we look at the slides, these are the topics that we have covered. First the pursuit of happiness. We look at the dynamics of happiness by using four chapters from Philippians. We can break down happiness. 50 percent you're born with it, 10 percent comes from your circumstances and 40 percent is what you do about it. St Paul's main principle states that your happiness comes from your belief system and God will bring it to completion. That was St Paul's belief even though he went through difficult circumstances he was able to be happy despite his circumstances. And the second lecture we look at the meaning of life and we reflected on suffering and the third lecture we look at the happiness that comes from the relationship.

Relationships we make

There is two kinds of relationships, "I-thou" relationship and "I-it" relationship. Most of our happiness from the "I-thou" relationship rather than "I-it" relationship. In "I-it" relationship you use the other person for yourself so "I" is the most important so "it" is just an object for your own happiness. Everything else is a becomes just an object for your own happiness, but that doesn't really give you happiness. But most of our business relationship and everything is "I-it" relationship. But "I-thou" relationship is you give up yourself for the sake of relationships. So, in "I-thou" relationship important thing is not I nor thou. It is the dash that connects I and thou, so the and is important. So, through that, we experience true happiness.

And then we looked at, change, last year, and then this year we are going to look at the journey to fullness. Think of it as a, for most of you, a vacation, with a spiritual reflection. It's a good enough place for you to have a vacation time away, but with a spiritual reflection component, I hope that. Spiritual reflection, when can you do that? Really, I don't want to live like an animal, you know, doing all kinds of things. Just work and eat and enjoy and a

pleasure and whatever. I don't want to live like an animal because I'm not an animal. I'm more than animal.

I want to live meaningfully and then to live meaningfully, spiritual reflection is very much part of it, because we, human beings are not just a social being or just a biological being. We human beings are a spiritual being. And if you're a spiritual being then without spiritual reflection, how can we live a meaningful spiritual life.

Just before the lecture I was talking to John and go, how's your life? And you're busy. And he said, "really, too busy you know, it's not good. And that is a more modern life. In a modern life, the word busy is what you experience all the time. Doesn't matter who you are, busy, whether you're a professional or a mother's staying home or ministers, religious people, people busy me too just, we're busy. Being busy really reflects my life. So many things to do. So many things to take care of, such as work, taking care of kids and so on. Every day is filled with a schedule.

Without my journal, I cannot survive. It's my second Bible. One day I left. Right? Do you keep bothering? Okay? Is he okay? Yeah. This is my second Bible, without this, I cannot go anywhere because one day I left this at home. I feel so vulnerable. I can't do anything. I couldn't even concentrate or even focus because I don't know what's going to happen, maybe email, maybe a text or maybe somebody's trying to call me in case of an emergency, whatever. This is my second bible and all schedules are within me without looking at what I have every day. I don't know what I have because so many I can't just remember anymore. We are so busy. Every day is filled with a schedule and we must also squeeze in what we want to do with the time leftover. If there's any time left over, if there's no time left over, we make sure that there is, there's time left over for golf or for something that we want to do.

Spend some Time for Reflection

So, this kind of retreat is a good opportunity to just forget about everything. To just forget about your life in Toronto. Just forget, forget about everything. Just enjoying each other, enjoy God. Enjoy the nature. When can you do that? You don't even see the earth, you know, you don't even touch the earth, many times. So, enjoy, some quiet time. Maybe today and tomorrow. Put your life into reflection mode instead of just talking. I mean talking is good

have good talks. But, instead of just social life, why don't you have time for yourself, the spiritual aspect of your life? Don't think of this as just another activity to check off, be more focused on being in touch with yourself. Maybe. Who am I? What am I going through, how do I feel? What am I feeling? Do I like my life? Do I like my relationships. Do I like what I do? What is bothering me? This morning devotion we talked about it. Do I worry about something? Why do we worry about these things? Or do we have some issues or challenges, family issues or family problems? Just think about it. Or you have personal problems. Health or finance or a relationship, you know, sit down. Is the best way, to just emotionally react to my situation or is there a better way to respond to my situations, in my life? So, things like that, I hope that we can have some, moments of reflection, you know, you may not actually get an answer, but what is more important is direction rather than rather than the answer, if you find a direction, the answer will come. So, the answer will not come immediately.

At least I hope that you can find some direction, for, your issues and problems. Doing spiritual reflection is important to keep our sanity in this very busy life. We are living, we are facing all kinds of challenges and problems. We worry about our future, our career, and some of us shared already that I'm making a career change, professional change. I'm very, very scared. What that might mean, what if, I don't get a good professional career, then how am I going to have a material basis for my living, for some others. You take care of your aging parents or ill parents and you're very worried about your sick, parents, some of you have children, that you must take care of and some of your children may have some personal issues and problems, or some of you have a newborn baby, and then you're struggling with a sleep or lack of sleep. And then, Oh God, how am I going to raise this child in this cruel world? And some of you are thinking about who my future partner will be, for me, to share my life with. So, all these things are issues. And some of you may simply feel that so lethargic and you suffer from meaninglessness and pointlessness of life as stress may have been piled up and you feel totally defeated. Or some of you are eager to have more, deeper spiritual life, deeper relationship with God.

How can you deal with all these things without spiritual insight and spiritual understanding? I think spirituality will help us greatly to restore passion, joy, and meaningfulness of life. I mean, recreation helps us deal with our stress, so we need recreation. But recreation can only do so much. Some of the stress you can be relieved off, but recreation can only do so much. You have

deeper problems you cannot deal with it even with recreation. We need to cultivate our spirituality to deal with the deeper challenges of life. You know, the people are becoming smarter and smarter and they realize that a lot of people realize that our material life is not good enough anymore. So even whether you're Christian or not, modern people have found the importance of spirituality. They're not religious necessarily. They found the importance of spirituality for their healthy living or good living, meaningful living. They're not any more satisfied with material success and all that. And even in our church, some of you are really reducing, you know, houses and all that. And because they believe to live with that kind of luxury, you must work that much more and all that stuff that's not worth it.

So, some modern people, whether you're a Christian or not, they have the wisdom that I need to cultivate a spirituality there. So, you see yoga clubs everywhere, Meditation Groups and book clubs and all that. All that. If exercises for your physical body, then these groups are for your mental and spiritual body for your mind and for your soul. Even modern people, whether you even non-Christians, they, do that. The person that I know, she's a Christian, but occasionally she comes to our church too. But she, not Christian, she says she's not Christian, but she comes to our church and she enjoys it. I know she went to Guatemala or Chili. I'm not sure which one. She's a yoga teacher and went to a yoga retreat. So, there's a beautiful mountain. You go there and then have meditation and quiet timing. I will show you some, sometimes here just over there and then sit down looking over the lake, you know. See there's another one. Oh yeah. No. So the importance of spirituality.

You know, human beings are not stupid. You live with luxury for a while. You realize that the luxury doesn't satisfy you anymore. You need deeper things to satisfy you. And so, we Christians do them. Meditation on our faith, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's what you're doing right now here. So, I hope that you use this opportunity to do that during this weekend. This year's theme is the journey to fullness. This is interesting to see life as a journey. I got two slides for that. That is what I took ours. When we pray a prayer for the Santiago Camino trip, which, which place was that? James garden in the winter. And that is Santiago. We went to Santiago Camino for one weekend.

Monotonous Routine vs Journey

So, journey. When we say life is a journey, what does it mean? What do we mean by that? Of course, it's a metaphor, life is not a journey, life is like a journey. It's a metaphor, but when you use a metaphor, you do it because it carries certain meanings. So, when we say that life is a journey, what meaning does it communicate? You know, we use metaphor to communicate something abstract, something that there's hard to describe or define. You use a metaphor. Something is like something, for example, you're like an angel or you're like a flower. Then, you know, you, you carry certain meaning about a person. Then maybe we say life is a journey. What the same me? I mean, we can use a different metaphor at least three metaphors I could come up with to describe modern life. Life can be like a hamster wheel. And when we say life is hamster's wheel, what does that tell us? Every day seems to be the same routine.

You wake up in the morning, go to work and on the weekend you kind of have downtime and it's too short and on Monday morning you must go to work like crazy. And in doing the same thing repeatedly. The movie Groundhog Day depicts that very well. You wake up in the morning, you go through the same pattern, same route. You know, when I look at it, look at myself, I take the same road and I got the same coffee shop and I do exactly the same thing. Almost like Groundhog Day. Every day is the same thing. It describes the meaningless repetition of life. If you cannot go, go ahead with your life because of your fear, you live like that.

If you don't change because of your fear, you'll just go around and round and round like that. Twenty years, 30 years, 40 years will pass by and then your life is over. What we've done, I can see life in that way. The second picture that I see is you can see life as a conveyor belt. The second one, the entry level into middle management, senior manager. You go up, but it's already programmed. You know, that there are a little bit more scary pictures. Oh, my goodness. You go to hell if you keep going down. You know, it doesn't repeat itself at the same place. It goes somewhere, but the destiny and path are already decided. You don't have much control over its direction or destiny. We are moving forward, but not by our will or intention. What I must do is already programmed for me. I don't have much choice. This metaphor shows life that is trapped in an already fixed pattern. time and space, we are trapped, or we can see their picture.

We can see life like Sisyphus in a mythology. Start there. What happened? That's the next picture. Next slide. How come? Okay. Sisyphus is a Greek mythology; this man rolls a big huge boulder to the up to the mountain. And then as you get to the peak, the rock rolls down to the bottom. You go down and pick it up and roll it up again. And at the top, it goes back down again. And I know this man he had a restaurant, he made lots of, not lots of money but enough money. And then he invested all that money for a retirement fund in stock. And then a few years ago, there was a stock crash. He lost all of them, he lost all of it. All is immigrant life. He saved money working so hard without having a vacation just for preparing for the retirement fund. And then it just disappeared. So, he is back to zero with my congregation. And that is kind of a, we can see life. I mean we did all that and at one point you lose everything.

And then sometimes life is like that. So, when we see life as a journey, we see a very different picture from those pictures that I showed you. When we say life is a journey, it has purpose, direction and process. These three things are part of journey, purpose, direction, process. You must have a clear purpose for the journey. What is your life's purpose? What is your unique purpose in life? And you must set the direction in trying to achieve that purpose. And I don't believe that purpose can be making money. I think we have a greater purpose. I don't think the purpose is just to enjoy it. We have a greater purpose. God called us for a certain purpose in life, not just for myself, for humanity, for others, for the church, for God. And then if you don't find that purpose, I don't know whether we can do even journey. So first we must find purpose and if you found a purpose, then you must have a direction. What am I going to? How am I going to serve this purpose or fulfill that purpose? And then there is a process that you must take. So, when we say life is a journey, we are saying very intentional living. You don't live life because it's there. You don't climb a mountain because it's there. You intentionally choose to live a certain life.

So, you are an active agent in choosing what kind of life you're going to live. You're not going to just live life because life is given, circumstances given to you. This is kind of life I'm going to live. So, then I must cut down that part of it and choose to live. And that is empowerment. When we say the life is a journey, it is empowerment. I decide what kind of life I'm going to live. I don't live life as it is given. I want to choose what kind of life I live, where there are some 40 years, 50 years, six years, seven years, eight years. This is one life,

and this is the kind of life I'm going to let you choose. And then you set the direction and then you make the process of it.

You know, some of you love to travel. And when you travel, you experienced something new, all the times, what your experience is never the same. You may go to the same place twice, but what you experienced there is very, very different. Each time I went to Paris three times, but every time it was different is it is never like on a conveyor belt. Unpredictable, mysterious, but fun. Not always pleasant, maybe, but still memorable. So, it is wise to spend money on travel, a wiser than buying things because you buy experience.

I was reading this article, the science of why you should spend your money on experiences, not things. It was written by Dr. Thomas Gilovich, of Cornell University. Here's, here's been studying the question of money and happiness for over two decades. This is what he said. We buy things to make us happy and we succeed, but only for a while. New things are exciting to us at first, but then we adapt to them while they're happening from material purchases diminishes over time. Experiences become an ingrained part of our identity. You know, when you buy a good tv, after a while you don't even feel it's a good tv. You won't really feel this, you know, new one when you buy a new car, the same thing. You drive it and after a while, you even forget that you are driving a really, really, I don't know. Maybe if you buy really, good car, you may feel every day Vroom Vroom.

I don't know if you know that. Yeah. So, you know, whenever I go on a mission in different places, I always experienced something new. You know, I went to several places, South Africa, Malawi, Brazil, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, China, and other places. Every place was so different. People I met or different enough. Funny thing is I met some Korean, secondary or third generation Koreans, second generation, third generation Koreans in Kazakhstan, in China, in Japan are all different. They all look like Russian and Chinese and Japanese. Every place you go to you have a different experience. Whenever I did that mission, the journey transformed me and challenged how I will think, and in that way, it shaped my identity. So sometimes you know, the shorter mission is better than just vacation. On vacation, you go to one place and then come back. But when you go shorter mission, you experienced something different. What I experienced there is ingrained in me. It will always be there as a memory, but not just as a memory, even when the memory is faded away, what that experienced it to me will remain deep in my soul.

That was what happened to the disciples. When they met Jesus, the experience was so deep and profound that it changed their lives. Gospel was written in such a way that it is a journey of the disciples who met Jesus. To discover that life is a journey you don't need. You don't need to go to Kazakhstan, you don't need to go far, far away, place right here in your life. You can experience their life is a journey. Jesus never went to any place other than Jerusalem and Galilee, 150 kilometres. That's all he travelled shorter than from here to Toronto is about 200 kilometres. Of course, Jesus walked so much longer than our journey. But Jesus didn't go to Rome or any, exotic places to experience their life is a journey, right in his own circumstances. He experienced that life was a journey. I hope that you take life. A life is a journey seriously. This journey's seriously an intentional. Life is more than a hamster's wheel. More than the conveyor belt. It must be otherwise too depressing. Why do you live? Kill yourself. Show up and now we're sad. Why do you live? kill yourself. If life is like a conveyor belt or if life is just like a hamster wheel, what's the meaning of just going on? kill yourself. So, life must be more than that. And I refuse to live like a hamster wheel or a conveyor belt.

Life is a journey and journey to fullness. Whether you take it intentionally or not, the fact that life is journey does not change. Every place you go to, every person you meet, every experience you have will have a profound impact on your life. It will shape your identity and your destiny. You know, I don't know where I read it, but this or what I got and it's beautiful. So, I so I cannot tell you who's, who said it. Every thought. We have, every decision we make, every action we, there's song, every step I take every wasn't his song, right? Da, da Da da Da da Da da Da da, right? Yeah, please. Okay. Yeah, something like that. Yeah. Every thought we have, every decision we make, every action we take, every emotion we can shape our behaviour. Every response we make to the world around us, every relationship we enter, every reaction we have towards the things that surround us and impinged upon our lives. All these things, little by little, are shaping us into being. How true that is.

Identity and Transformation

The people that you meet, new people that you meet, the new relationship you enter a new experience that you have, it all kind of makes you who you are. It shapes you. You are not completely formed yet. Your identity is not completely fixed yet you're being formed and being reformed and being

transformed. That's what life is. Journeys like you're continuously being formed, reform and transform and depending on who you meet, depending on what you did do and depending on what experience you have. As you look back, as I'm looking at, I'll be able to see the path to have walked on and then I say to myself, that is the path that I took, but when I look for and try to look at the path, it's not visible. I can't see it. What path am I going to take? And from here, maybe that path is not there yet. I need to make that path. From this point on, I can see the path behind me. Ah, this is the pathway to but the path I had on me is not written yet. It's not paved yet. It is you who must pave it. It is you that must make it and you must intentionally make it. You cannot just, okay, somebody can you please make a path for me so there I can walk. That's a wimpy way of looking at life. You must look at it and create and pave the path. What kind of life you want to live.

If you take our life journey more seriously, how much more meaningful and enriching our experiences maybe? Yeah, but as you look at it, it is not you who take the path to who make that spiritual journey. You allow God from now on to shape your journey. Can you do that instead of you create your own path? Can you allow room for God to shape that journey from now on so far? If you have worked so hard to shape your own journey from now on, do you have enough room for God, for allowing God to shape that journey for you? God will shape the journey for you, my friends. The real journey is not what happens outside. The real journey is what happens within us. What we are talking about is not what happened on the outside, such as having a new child, new baby, changing your job and career, moving and buying a new house, having children go away for school, beating a significant new person and so on. That's what happens on the outside. But what's happening on the inside, that's the journey when you just had a little baby. What happened on the inside?

You know, when I share already with you when Grace was born, she had a really difficult time to survive. My wife was in a kind of she was in an unconscious level. She couldn't even see the baby. I was the one who went to the room by myself and she was in an incubator and she had, I don't know how many needles, her whole body was filled with needles I don't know exactly what those. And then when I looked at those needles, you know, my heart, he ached. He came in tremendous pain, the little baby. Instead of being in the arms of mothers or fathers, you know, gentle, comfortable, the hand that in the incubator with needles and I was thinking about the nail on the cross. I was thinking about Jesus being nailed an on the cross. So what's

happening on the outside is not as important as what's happening inside. If you ever have a little baby, probably you learn compassion patience even sacrificial, painful, loving you don't mind that. You know what love is? I think I told you, then I talked to Joshua and then, yeah, I gave him something and, and then yeah, I can give you everything that I have. And then he said, now I know what you're talking about, you know because he has his own son. Yeah. So, when you have a baby, what is happening inside of you? That's what's more important than what happens on the outside. So a real journey is what happens on the inside, how they affect what happened on the outside, how they affected you internally. Did he make you a happier person and why or did it make you think about your life in a new way? How did that change the way you think about your life? Did it open your eyes so that you can see new things about your life and God? Did it make you think, why I have lived all this time with this narrow and suffocating attitude?

What is happening outside affects what is happening inside and we need to reflect on what is happening inside. The fact is we can see what is happening outside easily, but what is happening inside is hard to see. We are too lazy to see it or we are too scared to see it. We don't even think about what is happening inside us. How many times do you really think what is happening inside you? Many times, we don't even think about what is happening inside us. We're just busy doing outside, so this kind of opportunity you come, and I think about what is happening inside. If he only knows on our person, Gary, we are living only half of life. If we focus on inner life, we'll get to know our inner self better and the inner self is as real as our outer self, but it is harder to see, harder to hear and harder to understand our inner self. There's a person in the Bible you Nicodemus. He was a well-educated man, rich, powerful, religious and everything he had on the outside, so our men, he was almost perfect, but when Jesus met, what did he say? You must be born again. In other words, start your journey again with your inner person. What is happening inside of you? You must start new, born again, so Jesus is talking about, not an outer person, but the inner person.

One Person, Two People

We have two self's outer person and the inner person that what St Paul said. For which because we faint not, but though our outer man perishes at the inner man is renewed day by day. It's a King James version and NRSV says. So, we do not lose heart even though our outer nature is wasting away. Our inner nature is being renewed day by day. The scripture consistently

says that happiness resides in the inner person, not the outer person, not only the scripture but a lot of spiritual people, whether they're Christians or not. They all say that real happiness resides in the inner person. Most of you here will conceptually agree that that is true, but we naively believe this is not. I think, naive belief. We naive only believe that if our outer person is okay, our inner person will be okay. Our parents teaching their children immigrant parents, they only focused on outer man our outer self. Work hard, study hard, get a good job. It's all about the outer person. Then you'll be happy. They naively believe that if your outer person is okay, then your inner person will be okay. If your outer person is happy, then your inner person, will be happy, so we learned to focus on our outer person. We get a good career going, beautiful home. We make enough money to be comfortable. Nothing wrong with all of those, but it is wrong. If you think that these things will magically be translated into inner satisfaction, no, the happiness of our person will not automatically translate into the happiness of the inner person. That assumption is wrong

When you read Paul's life or other disciples life after meeting Jesus, their outer person became worse. They went through so much persecution, difficulties and hardship, but their inner person became renewed, tremendously. so outer person and the inner person they are not necessarily together. Our inner person is much more complex than our outer person. If we, if we like, this morning's breakfast was good, Huh? Yeah. That was good. And you know, said the highlights of the all the retreats are good food. It is, it is good food. If we eat good food, our outer person enjoys it. If you go to an exotic place and our outer person will say, Oh, nice, luxurious, but not necessarily the inner person. The inner person can be still sad, unsatisfied unhappy. The inner person cannot be satisfied with things like eating good food and buying good things. We cannot simply say that our outer person controls or determines the condition of our inner person, but we focus too much on the outer person. If the inner person will be okay

Today in the morning reflection. Bob, you lead a very, very good morning devotion today. Thank you. He was our leader, our leader, and he was so gentle and gave people time to reflect and meditate. We meditate on to not worry about tomorrow. Jesus' message, and it said, your body's more important than clothes while reading it. This thought came to me. All this body is your real self and the clothes are your present yourself, who you are and who you present to be. You were clothes to show who you are, but the body is, Jesus said, is more important than clothes. Who you are is more

important than who you present to be, and Jesus said, you're much, much more valuable than all these he's talking about wherever you are, you're much, much more valuable than anything in the world. If we focus only on outer self, we don't see the value of who we are. What did Jesus say? The Kingdom of God is where the Kingdom of God is within you. This is what Jesus said, neither shall they say, low here or low there for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you, so in you, what do you have? You have the kingdom not on the outer person, but in the inner person.

The image of God is carved not on the outer person. The image of God is carved on your inner person. When your inner person, he's happy, he's all right. Even though difficulties come, you'll be all right. You'll be taken care of. Do not worry. If your inner person is strong, you'll be able to overcome all the challenges that you face in your life. Find the kingdom within you. That's our journey. Finding the kingdom. What St Paul. What do you have in you? You have a treasure. He said, this is what St Paul said, but we have this treasure in jars of clay jars on the outer person, but in the inner person we have treasure so that it may be made clear that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us, and how many times we completely ignore what's going on in the inner person, our journey, his journey of finding kingdom, finding treasure within us. That's what salvation is. I hope that you can all find that beautiful treasure within you. Until then, all your efforts will go into proving yourself how valuable you are. You don't need to prove to yourself how valuable you are. You already are very valuable. Jesus said you are more precious than the whole world.

Jesus died for you. that much you are precious for the son of God to die for you. That much of your precious. In that sense, because your journey is to discover our true inner self. {At Carr} said, God, is at home. You're the one who went out. God is home. You're the one who went out. Prodigal son's stories fair much that. So, journeys journey to come back home to yourself. You went out, you need to come back home to yourself. Unfortunately, we don't see what's inside of us, so at this retreat, even though it is hard, practice it. Try to see what's your inner person. Have quiet time. Walk on your, have a coffee and think about what your heart tells you. Pray if you can, whatever you do, be in touch with your inner self. At first, you'll have a hard time. You don't even know what you're doing. You'll hear nothing at first, but slowly you'll be able to hear something truthful about yourself. So, prepare your inner self. My friends. I really hope that nothing bad happens to you. Nothing bad happens to you. I truly prayed it and I truly wish that and hope that, but

the thing is life is not like that. Nothing bad can happen. So, I don't want to live life wishing that nothing happens. That's a weak life.

That's kind of your waiting. You're just wishing for the lottery. You know. What is the chance that nothing bad will happen in your life? What is important is instead of just wishing that nothing bad happens in your life. You prepare your inner self so that when something bad happens, you know how to deal with it, but if you're not prepared but nothing bad happened, something bad happens, you collapsed, so I really wish that nothing bad happens to you but living with that wish is weak life. That's not what Jesus taught. Even something bad happens now it's good, good. Everything is good, but even then, something bad happens, I know how to deal with it. To do that inner-self has to be trained. Discipline can handle. It must be strong, then you can handle it. Then bad things happen. Good, good things happen. I can handle it. I'm not fearful. I'm not scared anymore of my life. Anything can happen in any situation. I can deal with it. That's what Saint Paul said. I learned to be content in all I do. Whether I'm hungry or well fed, I can do all with God who makes it possible. That inner person. If you have that, then your life will be much, much more confident and handle the challenges. You can risk more and then you can move on. That's why I'm saying the inner person is that important to build and cultivate that inner person in your life.

Reflection

Later, I'm going to share three things about what really makes a journey not possible, because of three things in our inner person. What three things are bothering us to stop us from taking a journey seriously. So that's what I'm going to share tonight. So today we talked about the journey is not journey on the outer person, but the journey on the inner person and the journey are finding treasure, kingdom and value within us and be strong. And then what are the things, our false self that we create for ourselves? Tonight, I'm going to talk about the false self-false inner self than, or you can, you can say the outer self, a false self that we create for us.

Journey to Fullness: Part 2

[Link to the Audio](#)

Today, I would like to reflect on this scripture passage that we read. As you read the scripture, you will find many examples where God works in unexpected way. Samuel came to Jethro, Katie's father, and he wanted to choose the king and Jethro, David's father had many sons, but he never expected that David will be the once. So the father told David, you, go to the field and tend the sheep because your brothers will have important time with Samuel. He never expected that David would be the one. So he sent David to tend the sheep and it showed all the brothers as he expected. But Samuel saw them all no. Don't you have any other or other son? Yea there's another son in the field but he's tending the sheep breathing. And then when David came, Samuel said this is the one that God has chosen. God is working many times in unexpected way. Galilee was not a known place. It was small village. Especially. Nazareth was a small town. You don't see that in the Old Testament.

And Jesus Ministry began in that small village, a very unexpected place. God accomplished his work, not in the temple, nor in the palace but on the cross nobody. Nobody expected that God will accomplish his ministry and his world for humanity on the cross. Very unexpected. We see today Naaman the chief commander of the army of Arab Naaman was a man of great power and influence in today's scripture you see very powerful people Naaman the King of Aram and the King of Israel. They were all powerful people. But none of them played an important role in today's story. Actually, the main character of today's story was a little servant girl who had no name, no one expected this insignificant no name person could help out Naaman that is god of the Bible, the Bible teaches us God who works beyond human expectations. Paul said, "but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world things that are not to reduce to nothing. Things that are."

[God Chooses what is Foolish in the World to Shame the Wise](#)

Meditate on that. This is how God works, God does not work with all these people, all this power, God works with those who are very very unexpected. God will use that to do his work. We human beings, live with expectations we defend the power that we have accumulated, we depend on our good circumstances and we depend on our ability and capability. We expect things to happen with our own power. When we don't have these things. We feel kind of insecure and we experience despair when the king of Israel heard about the news of Naaman coming to his country and then asked him to heal him from leprosy. He was angry because he doesn't have power and the capability and ability to be able to kill Naaman. He tore his clothes and said, "am I God?" he knew he didn't have power to kill him.

His anger and despair, we all understand very well, but one thing that king did not know that king did not know, that there was God in his own country God's servant who work beyond human expectations. Naaman was also angry with the prophet because his expectation was, "if I come here, the prophet will do something wonderful kind of raise his hand and then touch his leprose part and then do something, something dramatic but, prophet said, go to Jordan river and dip yourself for seven times. "Are you kidding me? Are you joking with me? Don't we have great rivers in my own country. I came all the way here for you to tell me to go into the river Jordan. You want me to go there and dip myself seven times, are you kidding me? He was angry because the prophet did not work as he expected.

We Are Often Slaves to our own Expectations

That's what human beings are like, how often we are slaves to our own expectations. We even expect God to work in our way in the way we want. God. I want you to do this. That is what I expect of you to do, If you don't do that, I'm not sure whether you're god. You know, we want even God to work according to our expectation, our schedule and our way and when our lives do not turn out as we expect, we get disappointed, upset, frustrated, and sometimes we even give up. We think our expectations are the best way for our lives and there is no other way better than that. We don't even know sometimes whether what we ask for ourselves is the best thing for us. We pray for it, but we don't even know that that's the best thing. Even Jesus shared that human weakness.

Jesus prayed, let this Cup away from me. He thought that that was the best way for me, but soon he realized that God's way was different from what he expected then he said, not by my will, but by your will and he accepted the cross which he did not really want to take. Our wishes and our expectations are not always the best way. Of course, we human beings cannot live without any expectations. We always live with some expectations, but when our life does not turn out as we expect, don't get so disappointed and give up. Don't give up your journey because the journey does not turn out as you expect it.

Just because life did not turn out as expected. That does not mean that my life is over. Maybe that's when new life may begin. The new life which is very very different from your own life, so from now on, don't be so rigid. My life should be this way. Your life may turn out very differently, accept that. May be very different, accept that and live out there may be new life. The world that we don't know and the world we have never experienced may open up for us. We'll encounter God who works beyond our expectations, demanding that our life should be this way, can be another form of bondage.

Don't Shape our life According to our Expectations, sense the movement of God in our Lives

What is important is not to make and shape our life according to our expectations, but to know and sense the movement of God in our lives and following. God does not lead our life as we expect you are not God. Let God be God we are not God, be still and know who God is. Sometimes God leads us in a way that I don't want. I never imagine we'll do our best in our life but let us not forget. Let us never forget, the key to our life is not in our hands. The key in our life is in God's hands who works beyond our expectations. Let us not be enslaved and let us not enslave each other with our expectations. Let us entrust our life in God's hands and then experience the freedom. Why do you worry? you entrust your life in God's hands. Don't limit God's power to your expectations. Don't let the size of your expectations be the measure of God's power, the size of your expectations much smaller than the size of God's power, God's power goes beyond that. Famous psychologist and philosopher he knew that, this is what he said, "let your mind start a journey through a strange new world, leave all thoughts of the world you knew before. Let your soul take you where you long to be close your eyes. Let your spirit start to soar and you will live as you have never lived before.

I'm not sure whether Christian or not. I don't know him that well, I just know him as a scholar, but he sensed that and that's what our Bible teaches us. That's what our God does. Your journey, an exciting journey. Our theme was journey to fullness this year, and your journey will be exciting journey to fullness. It may not be easy journey. It may not be what you expected. A lot of strange things may happen in your life, but entrust yourself in God's hand and you will experience the guiding hands of God. You'll be shaped as God shapes you. If you have shaped your life all this time on your own, from now live in God's hands and see how God shapes your life. Just because things did not happen as you expected, don't get angry, don't get frustrated, don't get disappointed. Just sit down. Listen, God, why trying to do that through this? Listen and God will show you the insight and God will shake you and God will show you and God will pave a path for you to walk along and then God, will never leave you alone. God will always be with you along that journey

Journey to Fullness: Part 3

[Link to the Audio](#)

Be like a Child

The last song was so good and appropriate for our talk. Give myself away so God can use us. I wonder whether that is the ultimate purpose of our spiritual journey. This afternoon I had time alone with Nolan. Grace and Josh were going into the discussion. So, I took a Nolan by myself while you are having a discussion. I was just sitting there, very, very nice weather, a breeze and the kind of sound of laughing in the background from group discussions and people talking. I was sitting there and then at first, I felt a little lonely. I'm by myself while they are having a great time of discussion and all that. So, I felt a little uncomfortable in the beginning and then saw myself, why do I feel lonely? I started getting into the inner journey in a way for myself. And then I looked at Nolan and he was sleeping for about an hour and a half. And then I looked at him, almost 30 minutes, just looked at him and reflected, looked at him and reflected, and the best thing to look at for meditation and reflection and how peaceful, that boy is, just sleeping baby, peaceful, no pretension, nothing to worry about, nothing to show off, nothing to prove himself. He was just sleeping. And it occurred to me, a spiritual journey is to be like children.

That's what Jesus just said. If you are not like a child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God. But as we grow up, you know, we come up with all kinds of distorted images about ourselves. That's not the image that is created for me, that is an image that we have adopted for myself to protect ourselves, to guard yourself, to conquer others, to be better than others. So, we created very many distorted images of ourselves. Maybe our spiritual journey is to take off one by one of those false images or distorted images that we have put upon ourselves for our own survival. So that spiritual journey is to go back to be like a child. And what as an adult, as an adult, that very difficult for Nolan is easy. He doesn't have to worry about making an income, he doesn't have to worry about feeding our family. Doesn't have to worry about people attacking him at all, that you know he's furious, safe, so it's easy for him. But for an adult, he will be very, very difficult job to do so. But the goal is there. The direction is there. To be a great person is not to be great in the eyes of the world. To be a great person is to be like a child. Simple, very simple. Appreciating what you have. Always be thankful for what you have.

I wonder that is our spiritual journey. Whether our spiritual journey is very pure, pure person, just like a child being pure without calculating, without

manipulating, without showing off, just being pure as you are, that it's as simple as that, but that is the most difficult thing to do. This identity is a very, very strange thing. We are struggling with our identity. Who are you? Really? Who am I? Is it the inner person who I really am, or the outer person I present? Who am I in the real sense? When Jesus just started the ministry, that was the first thing that he just had to overcome. It is an amazing revelation when Gospel writer wrote about Jesus' life. The first thing Jesus had to deal with was his identity, nothing else, and when I discovered that, wow, this identity thing is a very serious matter. They're very confused with our own identity in many ways. We don't know who we are. That's why we are struggling so much in our lives.

So, when you look at the Gospel, this is how it begins. It begins with Jesus Baptism. Jesus, when Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him, John would have prevented him saying, I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me, but Jesus answered him. Let it be so now for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented and when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were open to him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and a light on him and a voice from heaven said, listen, this is my son, the beloved with whom I am well pleased. That is the conclusion of the baptism of Jesus. The conclusion was about Jesus' identity. Who are you? You are my beloved Son. That was what was revealed at the Baptist. Nothing else. Jesus' identity was established at the baptism and that was the first thing God did in the Ministry of Jesus Christ.

Finding our Identity

That's how Gospel writers saw, but right after that there's a temptation story, but listen to temptations story very carefully. This temptation story is about Jesus' identity. It was nothing like temptation you're thinking of. This temptation story is about Jesus' identity. Let us look at it. Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights and afterward he was famished. The tempter came and said to him if you are the Son of God if you are the Son of way, he's already the Son of God. Baptism already said, Jesus is the Son of God, and Satan is coming to Jesus and say, if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread, but he answered, it is written. One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the

temple and saying to him, if you are the Son of God again, if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down for it is written. He will command his angels concerning you and, on their hands, they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him again, it is written to not put the Lord your God to the test. Then again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, and he said to him, all these I'll give to you if you will fall and worship me. Jesus said to him, away with you, Satan, for it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve only him. Then the devil left him and suddenly angels came and waited on him. Temptation was about Jesus' identity. Jesus is the Son of God and he was already revealed that he was the Son of God, but Satan kept asking, Jesus, prove your identity. Proof your identity by doing all these fantastic things. Wow. That's a revelation. That tells us a lot. God gave us the identity. The world asks us to prove your identity. Who said those were the criteria by which Jesus becomes the Son of God. It is what Satan made, it is the will Satan made up. It is not what God wants from Jesus that was what Satan made up because that is what all human beings all fallen human beings. These are what the world wants, and these are what human beings want, so you do all those things that I'm telling you to do.

Then prove that you are the Son of God. Jesus never fell into that temptation. Jesus at the inset, worship God and serve him only. I'm not going to worship anything that you say, I'm going to worship only God. Nothing else. Ninety percent, 99 percent fall into that temptation to prove their identity. When was Jesus' identity finally revealed right in the beginning when God said at the baptism, you are my beloved Son, and then right at the end, at the cross, Jesus' identity was revealed where at the cross. Let us read that part. Now when the centurions and those with him who were keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, Truly this man was God's son, century the gentile. At the end. In the beginning, God said, Jesus, Son of God, in the end, recognized the Roman, the Gentile, the world, recognize that Jesus was God's son. Jesus was God's son and he never tried to prove that he was God's son. His identity was revealed by Jesus being faithful to the cross, not by proving it. That shallow. Jesus was the not trying to prove his who he was. He was just faithful to who he was to the cross.

That's why Jesus said, you want to follow me, take up your cross and follow me. If you don't take up the cross and you cannot fall on me, you try to prove yourself and you try or want to follow me. You can follow me by trying, trying

to prove yourself. You want to prove to you, are you? Do you want to follow me? Take up the cross. Be Faithful to who you are. This tells me a lot about how I'm supposed to live. Jesus was not influenced by what the world falsely expected of Jesus and from Jesus. That is a strong man. Jesus is a strong man. He was not falsely influenced by what the world expected of him or for him. He was himself. The world tells you, be this. Then I will tell you, you are the son of God. Teach us to no to that she just was just himself and a whole story in the Gospel is all about people accusing. Jesus ended disappointed with Jesus because Jesus did not meet the expectation of what they wanted and the ultimately because of that Jesus died on the cross. We are not that strong. They are easily influenced by what the world wants. Either by having it one, not having it and being envious of it. We can easily follow the false expectations of the world.

How the World Measures You

They look good because the world says it's good. Because the world made that it is good. But they didn't look as good, but it's not good in a real way, but we say that is good because the world says it is good. We are blinded, falsely blinded, thinking that that is good. Instead of truly finding who we are, we are trying to define ourselves with what the world wants from us. My friends don't define yourself by what the world measures, measures you with. From there, all kinds of problems begin. If you try to follow what world, what the world expects from you, you start creating false selves and they use to stop being like a child, you'd become somebody else you do not become who you are. We create fearful self-create itself and narcissistic self. I'm going to reflect on these three things. Fear, greed, narcissism. These three things are what many people, most people fall into it. We'll set the wrong purpose, wrong direction, and you will get two wrong destinies. Fearful because we cannot meet the false expectations of the world. Greedy because you're lured by the glory of the glory. This world to fall asleep promises narcissistic by trying to achieve what the world admires. They don't want to be like Gandhi. They want to be like Gandhi as a result, but they don't want to be Gandhi in the process. They don't want to be Martin Luther King. They want to be Martin Luther King at the end. They don't want to be Martin Luther King risking their lives. By just following the wrong expectations of the world we become strange people. Become strange people.

The other day a person told me about his friend. I think this describes so well the attitudes of many people. His friend was a cancer survivor of 10 years.

He had cancer 10 years ago and, he got treatment and then after 10 years it didn't recur. So, he was happy, and he realized how precious life is. Do you know what his conclusion was? Life is so precious I'll not think about anybody else. Now I'm going to think about just myself because this is so precious. I don't want to waste my life worrying about or bothering with other people. I'm going to do what I want. I'm going to live as I want. I'm going to live fully what I want to live. Wrong direction, wrong purpose. Jesus said you want to save your life. You lose it. You Lose Your Life for the Gospel Sake. Put Truth, you will find it. It will save it. Many people live like that. You know, my life is precious. One Life I have. Why do I have to bother with all the people? I'm going to just live for myself and my family if they're okay, I'm fine. Whatever happens in the world does not my business? What if whatever it happens to other people, that's not my business. Okay? I'll help as much as I can, you know, just to relieve my conscience or guilt or whatever thought beyond that problem, my problems, me and my family. Why bother with other people?

Two Ways to Live

You want to save your false self, you'll lose your real self. And those who gave up their false self for Jesus' sake will find true self. In Greek life. There are two words for life, Zoë, and Psuche. You can say. Zoe is kind of meaningful existence. Psuche is bare survival. Are you going to live for survival? Or are you going to live for meaningful existence? I think we should live a meaningful existence. I don't want to live Psuche alone. Psuche. Good. But I want to live Zoë. Jesus said I came to give you life. Life abundant. And that is the way. That's what Jesus Christ came to give our journey is to have abundant Zoë. Okay, great. So, can you stand up a little bit? I think some people are falling asleep.

I talked about fear, greed, and narcissism, and the first thing that we need to cultivate in our spiritual journey is trust. Trust is the best way to overcome fear. When the Israelites were freed from Egypt and they took the journey to the promised land, and the first place they encounter was wilderness and, in the wilderness, they trained for. They were trained for trust. Do you trust me or not, God wanted to ask the Israelites, are you going to follow me by trusting me or are you going to not follow me? So, trust was the biggest thing, in the beginning, to be trained with. They had to deal with the uncertainty of the future. When we don't know about the future or tomorrow, that creates fear within us. When things are going okay, it's okay. You don't think about the future when things are going okay. What do you say to yourself? Oh,

tomorrow will be the same. Tomorrow will be the same when everything's going, alright. You don't even think about tomorrow. Tomorrow is exactly. It will be the same as today, so you don't worry about tomorrow. Predictable. Tomorrow is though hidden to us. Our life is like that. Whether we like it or not, people who go through difficulties, they realize that suddenly tomorrow may not be the same as today. Next year may not be the same as this year. When everything's going okay, you automatically assume that tomorrow with the same, but when things happen to you, suddenly tomorrow becomes uncertain. You're not quite sure about what might happen tomorrow, so whether you accepted or not, whether you accept that tomorrow's hidden or not. Tomorrow is hidden. It's the nature of life.

People who came to the Bible study in South Carolina, would they have known what would happen to them the day before, like Tuesday evening? Tomorrow was hidden to them. Would they be able to protect themselves if they did anything better? No. Since we don't know about tomorrow, the fear is built within us. It is a built in. Fear is part of us. There's nobody put lifts without fear. Everybody lifts with fear because fear is built in within us because tomorrow is hidden. We cannot get rid of fear because it is very much part of who we are. We don't need, but we don't need to let the fear paralyze us. Even though we cannot get rid of fear, we don't have to let fear control you, delaminate you and paralyze you. Let's say because of what happened in South Carolina. If you don't go to the Bible study or because of what happened in Boston, if you stop, if you stop running marathons or because of what happened in Virginia Tech, if you don't go to school, you're letting the fear trap you.

Yes, life is precarious, and our tomorrow is uncertain and hidden, but instead of letting the fear control you and trap you, you need to face and overcome it by trust, by building trust in you. When you do a spiritual journey intentionally, you will realize this thing, this wonderful thing. You realize that there is a mysterious power bigger than you that is controlling and guiding your life. You realize you realize behind all you do, there is always, there has been always this power that has helped you, guide you to come to this point as you do this spiritual journey intentionally. If you realize that power, you're in connection with that power, you're connected with that power. You sense it, you feel it. You recognize the hand of God who has guided you and lead you. In our spiritual journey, we recognize that we are not walking alone. God is always walking with.

How Our Lives are Shaped

We realize if we do not shape our lives, but our life is shaped by the good will of God and slowly you become free from fear and worries. Can you say to yourself, okay, from tomorrow I'm not going to fear? Can you say that? Okay, from tomorrow I decided my friends, I decided not to worry. Can you do that? You know, I mean, from tomorrow maybe you can say, I'm not going to smoke or from tomorrow I'm not going to eat the what is that bacon or whatever, those things. At least you can see that. But from tomorrow, I'm not going to worry tomorrow, from tomorrow, I'm not going to fear you can't do that. But somehow as you do the spiritual journey intentionally, you don't have to fear worries, disappear somehow in your life. Jesus said to not worry about tomorrow and that became the reality in your life. That's a result of a spiritual journey. Wow. From when I started from, when did I start worrying about my life? If the road is blocked, then you say, cool.

If there is no way, then you say, then you make the way. If there is an obstacle, then go over it. When the time comes, the door will be open. When the time comes, the road will appear for you. If you need it, God will give it to you. If you don't need it, God will take it away. There is a time to live and there is time to die. There is time to have a good time and time to rough time, time to laugh, and time to cry. When there's a storm, soon there'll be sunshine in all our certain circumstances. We simply trust that God will guide us, God who began a good work will bring to completion in his time, not in my time. Why do you worry, as the song says, give yourself away? Give yourself away. Why worry. Just simply trust in God. God will take care of you, won't he, as he has taken care of you all this time, as God has given you all the good things all this time, won't God take care of you and guide you and lead you. Spiritual journey. It's a mysterious journey.

You don't control it. You don't dictate it. You live it in God's hands. The song says, my life is not mine. It belongs to God. Keep it away so that God can use you. It is a journey to experience the wonderful opening for you, wonderful planning and then when I wasn't looking at northern, you have wonderful future and that wonderful future will be open for you and that is a message not just for Nolan, for all of you, and also for me. Wonderful Future. It will be open for all of us. Trust in God. At times you may feel lost at times. You don't see any future. Your future is bleak. Sometimes you feel hopeless under darkness really covers you and you don't see any good future that is coming to you but waits, we're trusting God. That's what Israelites had to do.

Even the very basic simple stuff, they had to trust God. Do you worry about food? You don't worry about food. Too much food we worry about. Too much food we worry about. But these guys in the wilderness they must worry about food every day and they are not to store it either. The Next Day, will God give us the food or not? And then the food came, so they hit thankfully, but they could not store it for themselves and the next day they must wait. Is God going to give me the food or not? That's how they lived, and then at the end, they got tired of it. They got tired of trusting God. I want food whether I trust God or not, I want food in my storage. So, they created a golden calf instead of trusting God, they wanted to take care of their own future. Don't make that same mistake in your life. Learn and disciplining yourself to learn to trust in God in all circumstances, especially when a crisis comes, a good opportunity to train yourself to trust in God. Last time when Grace and Will came for Nolan baptism, we had lunch together in a Chinese restaurant and then will set this you know, getting married to Grace and then having business in Boston and all these things. I realized that there is a bigger hand, that is, has been helping me because I'm probably, I'm a minister. His father in law is a minister. So, he said no, but he said that. I don't know where to go during lunch. So. Oh, that's very nice, you know.

Nice. And then, I mean, right now everything is going all right. So, he could say that, but I hope that he can say that even when things are bad because that's a spiritual journey when everything's going on, right? It's easy to say here, but when difficulties, difficult things come, can I say that that's a spiritual journey? If you can say that even when difficult things come to you, then you are doing the spiritual journey. And I hope that all of you do the spiritual journey. There's a beautiful passage in Isaiah. I want to read it for you, but now thus says the Lord. He who created you or o Jacob, he who formed you. O Israel. Do not fear for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name your mind. When you pass through the waters, I'll be with you and through the rivers. They shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you. How beautiful, how beautiful. That is the truth. This is what Isaiah experienced. I hope that this is also true for all of you. Meditate on it.

Building an Image

I'll give you another passage. From the new testament is a Paul statement. Then we are afflicted in every way but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

This is one of my favourite passages in the whole Bible. How strong, how strong he was, afflicted and perplexed, persecuted, but he will be able to stand through it. Another passage from Jesus. I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace in the world. You face persecution but take courage. I have conquered the world.

Don't live your life in fear. Live with trust, don't build fearful self, and then do all kinds of stupid things to overcome your fear, don't do that. You are creating a false image. You're creating a distorted image and that distorted and false image will vanish in the end. In our journey the second obstacle we will face is greed. You must understand how greed operates. The nature of greed is insatiable. That is what greed is. It is insatiable. You can never satisfy your greed. Of course, we want good things in life. That is human nature and it is good, but when you're obsessed with it, you become a slave of greed and if you follow greed, your life will be ruined. Especially in this consumer-oriented society. We are surrounded by advertising pitches that we need something more, something better, something different. We don't need them. We want them, even the pants I am wearing right now is a boss. I just wanted to show off what I'm wearing. Nobody said anything, so somebody gave it to me. So, I think it was a cheap one and I didn't wear it for about two years. And then one day. Wow, it is a boss. I must start wearing, that's why it's a little bit longer.

See this consumer-oriented society just makes us very dissatisfied. Always complain. Our journey cannot be a junior of greed. That's a stupid journey. The journey of greed that was not the journey of Jesus Christ. She just, she just said, I came not to be served, but to serve. He came not to receive, but to give. Life of giving generally is much, much happier life than the life of receiving my friends. Always find the opportunity to give rather than the opportunity to receive. Being greedy is the opposite of the journey of giving. What we need to cultivate within us is a spirit of contentment first, spirit of contentment. We must learn to accept our situations and not complain about it. Complainer's please know that you are having a problem.

You don't have a legitimate reason to complete. You have a problem. Problem is not out there. Problem is you so complainer, so listens very carefully. Okay? You're identifying with that kicking, each other. Hitting each other. Complaining is a very, very bad in our spiritual journey. Learn to be content. If you constantly compare yourself with others, you'll never be happy. There are always people smarter than you, prettier than you whether you

believe it or not. I'm going to talk about narcissism at the end, but and more powerful than you and more successful than you. You don't need to stick out to be important. You don't need to be the best of the best to be precious. Your identity is not determined by the performance in this world. The remedy of the problem of greed is to learn to be content. Real appreciation of what we have. Just walk around and look at the flowers and how beautiful the air, how nice, the people around you, how wonderful you are. Why don't you say that? Teacher? Huh? How wonderful you are, so yeah, how wonderful you are. Oh, nice.

The world will be a better place. Instead of continuously complaining about each other, we appreciate each other. This is what Saint Paul said. I've learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little and I know what it is to have plenty in all sort of consensus. I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. Doesn't matter the circumstances I have learned the secret of being content. He's the one who this future journey. When you do the spiritual journey, then you start having this thankfulness, gratefulness. Thankfulness is part of this future journey. Contentment. The spirit of contentment is a necessary tool to have for the meaningful spiritual journey. Then we can focus on giving and always don't focus on receiving in your life. Always focus on giving. Find the opportunity to your talents, your resources, your intelligence. If you're really, really, beautiful, you're attractive, whatever, and your personality, think about using it for other people. Think about using it in giving. Your life will come alive. The third thing you need to overcome is this narcissism. The world is getting worse and worse with this narcissism cosmetic surgery in this world is just a going really, bad.

Cast Away the Outer, Cultivate the Inner

I'm reading this book for the seminar to understand a little bit better about narcissism. That title is the narcissism epidemic, living in the age of entitlement by Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell. They said in their book, people who are born after the 70s, raise your hand. Oh, woman, you don't want to say that, okay, it not what I said, this is what the book says. The people who are born after 70, they're affected by this cultural shift of self-focus and the trends accelerate it in those born in the eighties and the nineties, so seventies, eighties, nineties. Be careful about narcissism. Parenting became more indulgent. Celebrity worship grew, and reality show TV show became a showcase of narcissistic people and very unhealthy

narcissism is very unhealthy. Unhealthy to yourself and to other people. The Internet allows people to have the possibility of instant fame and then look at me mentality. Narcissism magnified the false self to the extreme. That's what narcissism is. We examined Jesus' temptation in the beginning and the narcissism is the exact result of falling into all those temptations. It is the exact opposite of Jesus' teaching, an extreme form of self-centeredness. Even the religion became a tool for their self-glory. I've seen some religious people, very narcissistic instead of, I mean they are. They are saying that there are so religious, but they don't really care about others. They care about their own being religious. That's why being spiritual and being religious are two different things cannot be the same thing. You shouldn't be confused with those two. You can be quite self-centred while being religious like the Pharisee in Jesus' time. People look for religious experiences, religious high in St John of the Cross, the mystic, says that is spiritual lust.

The more focused you are, the more bankrupt it will become spiritually. That is not the journey to fullness. That is a journey to emptiness. By creating a more false self, we cannot find ourselves. Rather we'd lose ourselves. We lose joy, meaningfulness, and purpose. I said, the journey has purpose, direction, and destiny, and our purpose cannot be myself. Our purpose cannot be about me. Then the destiny will be nothing. If you see yourself, you lose it, but if you lose you or yourself for the truth, you'll find it. That is the truth. Listen to the truth. If you're obsessed, obsessed with your salvation, you lose your salvation, but if you don't think about salvation but live a life of trusting, giving generously, and serving and giveaway yourself. Then you'll find yourself.

In the end, as the end, I will say what Dalai Lama said. This is what he says. I believe the purpose of all the major religious traditions is not to construct big temples on the outside, but to create temples of goodness and compassion inside in our hearts. In your life do you build a huge temple on the outside or do you build a true temple in your heart, the temple of goodness and compassion inside you? That is a journey to fullness. Let us not forget who we are. Why are we here? And where are we going? These three questions, always ask, who are we? Why are we here? And where are we going?



Knowing God

Rev. In-Kee Kim

Knowing God: Part 1

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Reflection and Discussion

Forget about everything that you left behind in Toronto, your work, your worries, and anxieties, at least for two days. Let us not worry about what's ahead of us and let us focus on the present moment and enjoy the fellowship here. Let us be soaked in the presence of the love of our brothers and sisters and also in God's awesome presence. I hope that we can be all soaked, even though it's one or two days, then we can be really soaked by the presence of God. I hope that you can spend some time with your family, with your friends, and with your children, but also, have some time alone, to walk around, to think in this beautiful nature. Especially since this year's theme is Knowing God. It's a very important topic and there are lots of things that you can reflect on.

I hope that we have a great time together singing, talking, having a discussion and playing sports. To all the group leaders, the questions that you receive are not mandatory questions for you to answer, those are discussions starters. As you listen to the lecture, I hope that you can also come up with your own questions, jot down whatever triggers you and instead of just following each question and answering them one by one, just get the discussion going. While you're listening to the lecture you can take some of the insight and some of the things that interest you. I want you to write down those things and then discuss them with your group. Knowing God is a big and difficult topic.

Challenge Your Assumptions

How do we know God whom we cannot see, touch or analyze? It's a difficult topic. What does it mean to know God and what happens when you know God? Is there a process in knowing God? These are some of the questions that we are going to deal with at this retreat. We are going to talk about not only these questions, but there are many other things that we're going to deal with too. I don't think too much about the question 'How do we know God?', or the methodology of how we know God. I don't think I can give you the methodology. I don't think I can give you an answer to that. How will you know? I cannot do magic here. So that after this retreat, I want you to, instead

of thinking about the methodology of how you know God, I want you to think about your own assumptions about God. I want you to think about some of the assumptions that you do not even question yourself. Assumptions that you just adopted and you don't even know where you got that idea about God. They may be from Sunday school or from your parents or from society. This is what people say of God, so challenge the assumptions you may have.

You may also have some language and language is great to articulate what we feel. What we experienced and what we know is great, the language is good, but sometimes language can limit you because you're locked up in a certain language. For example, let's say the word salvation. Then you are locked up. A certain image is already there and you cannot go beyond the image that you have or understand that you have about salvation. Language can limit your understanding, language can limit your perception and your image. So I want you to free up your image. I don't want it to be locked up in the language. I want you to be freed up from all of that.

When this happens then even about salvation, you have a new understanding of salvation, a new understanding of God. I hope that these without languages and these assumptions, I want you to think about who God really is to you. Certain perceptions and image that you are locked up into, I want you to free that up so that you may experience the reality of God in a real, tangible way. Knowing God or our understanding of God is very important because your relationship with God will be determined by your understanding of God. If your idea of God is a very strict authoritarian God, then your relationship with God will be a very formal and courteous relationship. When we sing the song As the Deer Pants for the Water, the second verse is 'You are my friend and You are my brother'. Even though He is a king, God is our friend.

Jesus is our friend. One lady came up to me and said, "I can never understand that. I can never understand that God can be a friend or Jesus can be a friend. Jesus who's always up there. Oh, the powerful person. But I can never see Jesus as a friend". Since some people just have a hard time understanding God in that way, their relationship with God will be determined by their perception of God. For example, another woman came to me and said "I cannot relate to the father image of God. The last song is a beautiful song. But is a good, good father only, if they could put good, good mother, then it would have been perfect. For me, I love my father and my father loved me, but we didn't really have that kind of relationship. First of all, my father

passed away when I was young, and he was 70 years old. And until then my father was somebody so far so I cannot get near to and never had a discussion. So when we say that my God is my father. It doesn't really ring true to me. My mother has been always with me. We have a very intimate relationship, we have and the kind of love she showed. So when I said, my God is like my mother, then it rings more true to me". Depending on what image that you have about God, your relationship with God will be determined, and also your life will be affected by your understanding of God. Knowledge of God affects you and your life. You all have certain ideas of God and these ideas shape your worldview, your morality and your lifestyle consciously or unconsciously sometimes. You think "Oh God is like this as well I have to behave like this". Some people do that more consciously, religious people do that.

Know God With Your Whole Existence

Always think about God, always think 'what would God think?'. What would Jesus do? WWJD Right? Some religious people always think about WWJD, what would Jesus do, so they're more consciously and explicitly think about God. But a lot of other people also unconsciously or implicitly think about God in the back of their minds. That kind of shapes your worldview, your morality, and your lifestyle. Depending on their understanding of God, some people may live with tremendous, guilt and pressure. So knowledge of God is very much related to our life and it is important. Knowing God is not just an exercise of the brain, but knowing God is something to do with your whole existence. Knowing God is intertwined intimately with what I experience daily, so knowing God, whether you can define or articulate, 'this is my understanding of God' or not, is still is very much interrelated to your personal daily life.

This is what Hosea said: "come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth." Beautiful Poem, that beautiful poem is a beautiful passage. But when you look at this passage, what you can see from this passage is that God is very much involved in our lives very intimately.

God is not God up there somewhere. God is not just a concept. God is the living being who is very much intertwined with our living. God will tear us and God will strike us down but God will also heal us and God will bind us up. Look at the language, it's very much our daily lives. God is right there with us, things that are happening in our lives, they do not just happen. God is behind it. God is with us. God is within us and God is among us. And Hosea saw that this is what God is doing. God is striking them down, but also God is raising them up and God is healing them. Hosea saw vividly, graphically, what God does to his people. So Hosea's conclusion is, "let us know. Let us press on to know the Lord."

A New Understanding of God

Saint Paul's religious experience right on the road to Damascus he had a divine encounter. He was on the way to persecute Christians. He was pretty sure what he was doing was right and he thought he did it for God. A very strong light came down upon him and he fell from the horse and he heard the voice. The voice said he was Jesus who's followers Paul persecuted. It was a supernatural experience. Not many of us have that kind of fantastic experience, but what amazes me about St Paul's experience is not that it was supernatural. What amazes me about Paul's experience is what happened after his supernatural experience. What happened to him after that supernatural experience? It totally turned him around. See, before that experience, Paul used to live comfortably with a well-defined understanding of God. He probably would say, 'I know God, I know that what God wants and this is what I want to do, and this is why I'm doing this'. Paul was persecuting Christians because he believed he knew that that was God's will.

He was very clear, comfortable with his own well-defined understanding of God, but his unchallenged knowledge of God was seriously challenged through his experience. Because of this, he got totally confused. 'I thought that was God, but now I know that was not God', he was totally confused, disillusioned. From then on, he started a real search for the God whom he truly believed. What is the God and who is the God whom I truly believe deep in my heart, not the God whom he adopted from his tradition, religion, and upbringing. Not the God I took automatically not that kind of God. I want God who really matters to me.

He wanted to find God for whom he'd give his life for, not just a theoretical God, who would have had no effect on his life. He was searching for God for

whom he would sacrifice his life for and he did since then he devoted his life to searching for the understanding of God. From that experience, he started searching for the God who really mattered to him. And in the journey in the process of searching for God, he got tremendous insight, not only about God but also about himself, about faith and about life. Knowing God is tremendous. He shared all his insights about God in his letters. You know when I read Paul's letters and his messages, I felt like he was like looking at the X-ray of our body or kaleidoscope of our body just going through and examining what is going on. Food goes down into the stomach and then from there, it goes through the body and it's like the whole dynamics of the body is like our life, our spiritual and inner life.

Unique Living God

He had clear and sharp insight about life. He found his own authentic God. When you find your authentic God, your life will be affected significantly by that God. I want to call that authentic God, living God. That authentic God is living God. There were three experiences on the road to Damascus. He became free finally from his prejudice and from his uncritically accepted assumptions about God. With that liberated state of mind, he started interacting with the living God. And from that interaction, he got living knowledge about life, about faith, about salvation, and about God. That was where he got all his insights about himself life and God. You know the living God, this living God, is very unique to each person. The living God that appears to you may not be generally agreed on doctrine or dogma about God.

Paul had so much trouble because of the living God he found. When he had God of doctrine, God of dogma, he had no problem, he could live comfortably. But when he found the living God and when he lived out, the will of the living God, he had so much trouble, he discarded the well-defined doctrine such as circumcision, his attitude towards gentiles, and about food and all that stuff. That was a well-established understanding of God, but he started throwing that away as he found the living God. The living God is very personal and unique to you.

The living God that is revealed to me may be different from the living God that is revealed to Simon and different to a God who's revealed to Inha. Living God is very unique and personal. When you read Genesis, you encountered this passage a lot: God of Abraham God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. It didn't

say God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why? Because the God of Abraham is different from the God of Isaac and is different from the God of Jacob. Their experience is different. Abraham's life was very different from Jacob's life. And God who is revealed to Abraham is very different from God who is revealed to Jacob. Of course, it's not a different God but a different revelation to different people because their experience is different. God wants us to know the living God because only that knowledge will truly affect us. All other concepts of God will have no effect on us. You will not give your life for, you will not sacrifice your life for that concept. Don't live with the concept of God. Live with the living God. The concept is very easy to live with, but truly having the living God is very difficult. What kind of God is a God who has no effect on you?

Is there a God? If God has no effect on you then what kind of God is that. If God is that God that you will not sacrifice anything for what kind of God is that? That is a concept of God, not the living God. And many people live with the concept of God and they are comfortable with that. They just like to have nominal God for their own security and comfort. Only when we get to know the living God that God becomes a true God to us. A general understanding of God is really a concept. What God wants from us is to know the Living God, because that will make life our so much more abundant and enjoyable.

Movement of Life

Living God is dynamic, not static, the concept of God is static, but living God is dynamic. God himself or herself is a dynamic movement within oneself. God is in dynamic movement. God is not a static concept. God is a dynamic living in me. Listen to the psalmist confession "as a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you oh God, my soul thirsts for God, for the Living God". He's not satisfied with the concept of God, his soul thirsts for the living God. "When shall I come and behold the face of God by tears have been my food day and night. While people say to me continually, where is your God?". He's so thirsty for the living God and he was challenged by people: "where is your God?". We should ask ourselves, where is your God? Where is your God? Not somebody else's God, not your parents' God. Not your friend's Gods. Oh, where is your God?

That is something that we have to ask ourselves. We need to encounter the living God. Nicodemus came to Jesus one day and Jesus said, "you want to enter into the Kingdom of God? You have to be born again" and he said, "you

hear the wind, but you don't know where it's coming from and where it's going to". It's like in a mystery, uncertainty, but one thing that's clear in that passage is that there's a movement. The dynamic God is working in your life, that is what it means to be born again. There's a movement. You don't know where he's coming from and where he's going to, but there's a movement. Jesus introduced that kind of dynamical living God. Knowing God is not about gathering information on God, then ministers or theologians should know God the best. Do we? No.

We know as much as you do. We know about God, but knowing God does not depend on how much information you have about God. Knowing God is not about information. It's not about knowing about God, knowing God is different, knowing God is not about information, knowing God is about transformation. It's not a cerebral exercise, it's not what's happening in your brain, it's what's happening in your whole being, not just information you gather, you get transformation as you get to know God. As you try to get to know God, a new movement begins with us. Somehow before nothing moves, but as you get to know God somehow in your life there's a movement. Something is moving in your heart, in your thinking, in your emotion in your life, in everything, you start moving.

When you have the concept of God you stay the same, always the same. You're just going for settlement, security, but as you get to the living God, the movement begins. That's how the journey begins. Our whole self-starts moving towards the truth to God. The problem is that what we have is the concept of God. That's why there is no movement, no change, no transformation, just a lot of doctrines within your brain. And with your stubborn will, you'll clean your doctrine that's all you do. As you get to know the living God a journey begins. A life that used to try to establish the settlement now starts the journey. If you believe in God for your settlement, that's not Christian God. That may be fine in some other religion, but God is not about the settlement.

The Journey of Knowing God

Knowing God is like taking on the journey of knowing God. The first person who introduced the Judaeo Christian God, who is that, the first person who introduced Judaeo Christian God? Abraham. Abraham was the first person who introduced Judaeo Christian God. He was an idol worshiper, he was living in war, he lived very comfortably serving idols, just like many of us in

North American society. “Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants”. You go to the promised land. And I said yes we'll go. So they throw away idols and they started the journey. What happened?

They got tempted. They got settled in Haran so they lived in Haran for many years and God called them again. ‘No, not Haran, go further. To the promise land, to Canaan’. So Isaac wrote this: war to Haran is a settlement. Maybe this God will give us better settlements, better security, better life. So they stayed in Haran. But God told him from he must move from Haran to Canaan. God called Abraham out of the settlement and pushed him into a journey. This journey was not the journey to live a better life. This journey was a journey to know God. If your life is a journey then that journey is a journey of searching for the true living God, the living God Paul found, the living God Abraham found and the living God Jesus introduced.

Eternal Life is Quality of Life

Jesus prayed in this way. Hear this interesting prayer, his last prayer before he died. ‘And this is eternal life. The thing they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’. That's why I like John, Gospel John. That's why I taught seven times in this church I did seven times the study of Gospel John. His understanding of eternal life is very unique. His understanding of eternal life is knowing God. That's what eternal life is. Eternal life is not just you go to Heaven after you die. Eternal life is knowing God. So our journey of knowing God is our journey of eternal life. Eternal life is a quality of life, not the quantity, the length of life, it's the quality of life. The kind of quality you want to live with eternally. That is what eternal life is. Knowing God is the key to eternal life.

That's why Saint Paul said: knowing Christ is a surpassing value of all things he did and was. Before he didn't do that. Now, knowing Christ, knowing God is the only thing that's most valuable. And this is what he said: these things he did and he was, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and regard and regard them as rubbish. I called that real God, I call

that living God. He was able to regard everything else rubbish because he found the most precious thing and that is Jesus Christ. That is God. That is living God, not the concept of God and he lived. Without knowing God we perish.

This is what Hosea said: my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge. You know when I look at Saint Paul's life, his life opened up, you know there is a life that is opened up and there is a life that is not opened up yet when I look at Paul's life, his life opened up. When he truly got to know the living God, his life opened up. Not God the of the law, not nominal God, not God of the custom or culture, but the living God that opens up our life. The door of the mystery of life opens up when you get to know the living God. As we get to know the living God, meaning, purpose, direction, passion, abundance, hopefulness, joy, aliveness, thankfulness, all these things become characteristic of your life. What more do you ask for?

I think about when people's lives open up. For example, Paul laid out all his prejudices and then started to get to know God. I was thinking about Katie, she probably thinks that "I don't have much time left on this earth, I'm gonna go soon". I think she feels that she senses that. Cancer has spread all over her body, but when that happens, a different door opens up. I think her thinking right now is very different from our thinking. The kind of thing that she reflects on will be very different from the kinds of things that we reflect on. Sometimes when life tragedy hits us the door that did not open before opens up. You see different things through that open door. You know what we do on the surface, it's very similar. We work and come home tired. You eat, watch movies, dramas and take care of your young children and sometimes we can be relaxed and do things that we enjoy. Sports, movies, music. What determines the quality of life is not what you do on the surface. It's what you feel and experiences inside in every moment of your life.

Real happiness is not what you do on the outside. Real happiness, is a quality of how you feel inside every moment. When I'm happy inside, what do I do? I enjoy it. Whatever I eat. I enjoy it. My problem is even if I'm not happy I enjoy what I eat. But when I'm not happy inside, whatever I do, I don't find it enjoyable. When you're enlightened, everything comes alive. When you're sad and, when you have problems, when you're not happy inside, even though you look at a beautiful lake and a pond outside and you see it, it saddens you more. Rather than saying, oh, look how beautiful that is. This

is what Saint Paul said in his letter to Ephesians, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him so that the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints and what is the measurable greatness of his power for us who believe according to the working of his great power" and when you look at this passage, there's a process. First, you come to know him. The father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation and then you will come to know him, and then your eyes of the heart are enlightened in other words, open. Then when it's open you'll be able to see hope and riches and immeasurable greatness of his power. All these things, this is a process. The process is: you know God, eyes of your heart enlightened, you know the abundance of life and power of life. All eternal quality.

Inner Life

It's not what's happening outside it's what's happening inside. Two trees that you see, you look at two trees, they look the same when you first see it. But if there's a water going up and down and up and down there's a dynamic movement that tree will bloom and have leaves and flowers. A dead tree, as time goes by, will decay, deteriorate, ultimately it will die. Two trees on the outside look the same. But the interior, the inside is very different. What determines our fate, our destiny, is not what's on the outside, it's what's inside. You know, if you want to know how powerful Paul's inner life was, even in prison, he was happy and told Philippians to rejoice always. In the circumstances where we may feel totally miserable he was happy and advised others to be happy. How is it possible? Because his inner self-was strong, he did not depend on his outer circumstances.

His inner life was so strong that his actual circumstances cannot take away the power of life he enjoyed. I think it's got to do with his knowledge of God. As we really got to know God, his external life did not necessarily get better. As I said if you want settlement the Christian God may not be the right God for you. Paul's life after getting to know the living God was very difficult. It wasn't easy. It got more difficult. His situation became worse: persecution, imprisonment, hardships. He's telling other people, other disciples, "are they the ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman. I'm a batter one with far greater labors, far more inclusiveness with countless floggings and often near death. Five times I received from the Jews the 40 matches minus one

three times I was beaten with rocks. Once I received a stoning, three times I was shipwrecked, for a night and the day I was adrift at Sea, on frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the Wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters, in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food cold and naked and besides other things, I'm under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all churches”.

Think about how difficult his life was. Through all this, his inner life so strongly intact, this is what he said: “For I have learned to be content with whatever I had. I know what is very little and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”. That's, confidence, that's power. That's the kind of life I envy and I want to follow. What a strong life. What a cool life. That is the kind of life I want to live. That only happens on the inside and as you get to know about that, the inside becomes strong. So truly knowing the living God can do wonderful things to us. My friends, it is difficult to truly know the living God. Why? Knowing God is like an oxymoron. God is by definition unknowable, so knowing the unknowable is an oxymoron. God cannot be contained within our knowledge, God is too big to know, God is ineffable.

Rules Do Not Define God

About two or three months ago, I had so many nosebleeds, it's not because I worked harder than before. Every morning I get a nosebleed, I was concerned, what's going on here? We moved into a condo and the condo is a little too dry. So I bought a humidifier. I think it got a little better one night, but the next day it started bleeding again. I couldn't figure out what the problem was. And then I finally got the answer. About a week before, I went to clean my nose so thoroughly, in the shower, I cleaned every single thing I don't know how long I was doing it for, just nose cleaning. And I must have damaged the left nose cause it only came out the left nose not the right nose. Later I found you need to leave something there. You cannot clean it perfectly. So I bought nose cream, and I put it on. Two days later I was fine. I never noticed it was up there. I mean it was a mystery to me, but there's always a reason, right? It's always a reason, logic behind it.

Last year, September 14th, legal LIGO observatory discovered the evidence that proves Einstein's gravitational wave. 1.4 billion years ago, two black holes collided with each other and merged and the rest of the mass created a gravitational wave. The observatory waited and waited and picked up that signal and then picked up another signal after that. So they can prove that Einstein was right. Einstein was amazing, wasn't he? And these scientists, I think they are amazing. How they find that it happened 1.4 billion years ago? They're amazing, but still, all it did was to only discover the rules that govern the universe, the rule that governs my body. But there is no rule that governs the movement of God. God is beyond every rule, God made the rules and law, but God is not bound by those rules and laws. There's nothing in the world that binds God.

God is completely free. God is free to love us, God is beyond everything. So Muslims confess this way, Allahu Akbar, God is greater, God is always greater. God is greater than the greatest thought you may have. And our gospel writer John expressed it, differently, but the same thing. "No one has ever seen God beyond our visibility beyond what we can understand". When we say they know something very well we can say we have mastered it. But we can never master God. We can never be experts on God. I think Thomas Merton's prayer was the honest prayer, when he said, "Your brightness is my darkness, I know nothing of You and by myself, I cannot even imagine how to go about knowing You. If I imagined You I'm mistaken. If I understand You, I'm deluded. If I'm conscious and certain I know You, I am crazy. The darkness is enough". What an honest statement. That's who our God is like. Thomas Merton's most famous prayer is this: "My Lord I have no idea where I'm going". Saint Augustin said: "if you have understood, it is not God. God is a mystery, so knowing God is like knowing the mystery.

Seek God

In your journey of knowing God, you will encounter the hidden God and revealed God" it's like hide and seek. The grandchild of Rabbi Baruch, a very famous rabbi, his grandchild was playing hide and seek with another boy he hid and stayed in his hiding place for a long time assuming that his friend would look for him. Finally, he went out and saw that his friend was gone, apparently not having looked for him at all and that his own hiding had been in vain. He ran into the study of his own grandfather crying and complaining about his friend. Upon hearing this story, Rabbi Baruch broke into tears and said God to says, "I hide but there is no one to look for me". Sometimes we

don't know when God reveals himself and when God hides in our journey we will encounter both the hiding God and the revealing God. When God hides I hope that we don't become the ones that don't look for God. Share some of the thoughts of knowing God, I hope that some of your assumptions of concepts of God, if they have no effect on you, they're useless, they're merely a concept, they're merely nice ideas.

I hope that we may be in a small way make an encounter with the living God in every day of our lives. I hope that throughout this retreat I hope that you encounter that living God and think about your own assumptions and concepts of God

Knowing God: Part 2

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

I was sitting here while the praise team was practicing, it's not always simple as you think because they have to change their chord and emphasize certain parts and they have to coordinate, so it's always emotional and inspiring and inspirational. Thank you very much. And while listening to the praise I had this kind of image or message in my mind. The message is that you go in and liberate people from the concept of me because people are instantly in their own concept of me. I want them to know me rather than holding onto the concept that they have. I want them to know me. That kind of message came up very strongly while listening to praise. I think that's the main message for this retreat. Instead of just holding onto that concept of God, we need to let go. Even though it's scary sometimes, you have to let go of that so that we can encounter and meet the living God the real god. So what we want to do. Now we want you to be the agent of doing that movement of truly knowing the living God. I'm going to explain a little bit later.

Real Understanding of the Living God

This morning we discussed three things at least. Depending on what understanding you have about God your relationship with God will be very different. If you have nominal God, your relationship with God will be just, "God is there", and God is not involved in your lives. It affects the relationship between you and God and also affects your lifestyle, your worldview, and your morality. So it is important to have, not right understanding, I don't want to say right or wrong, I want to say living understanding, the real understanding of God. Then your relationship with God will become much more vital, alive, and your life will become much more abundant, filled with hope and riches and the power of God. When you truly have an understanding of God all these things will be the characteristic of your life. I hope that we all understand that God, cause it's important to know God.

Secondly, knowing God is not to fill your brain with the information. We have a tendency to continuously know with our brain because that's the only way we learn how to know. The education system's only way to know is through

your brain. But the real knowledge does not necessarily come from the brain. The real knowledge comes from your life, the whole existence. Our whole understanding of knowledge is a problem because we only think, when we get to know somebody, we only think about brain exercise, cerebral exercise. But knowing God is very different. You can never know God with your brain, you can only know God through your whole existence. So knowing God always brings about transformation and change. Knowing God does not leave you alone, knowing God and change always go together. When we do a brain exercise it can be totally separate from the rest of your life. But in knowing God you have no choice but to change, personal change. It brings transformation, not information.

The Journey of Knowing God

Thirdly, knowing God is a process. It's a journey. It is a process of our eyes being opened. It is a journey of hide and seek. Sometimes God hides and we seek and we find God and then we get arrogant and too confident, and God hides again. And then we seek God again and you find God and then you get overconfident and God hides again. And then you go and seek out. That process has to continue. Hide and seek, but sometimes we find God about 10 years ago, 20 years ago, and nothing changes at all. How is it possible? How's it possible that you know God once and then that's it. Because the only thing that you can see is a small fraction of God. You cannot see the whole of God. How can you say that? This is everything about God. That is problematic, that itself is a problem because we only see a partial thing and you're making it whole. A blind man went to the elephant and touched it on the leg and he said, oh, it's a cylinder. I mean yes, he has a leg like a cylinder, but it's not. You're right that when you say that, 'yeah, an elephant has a cylinder-like leg', that is right. But when you start saying that that elephant is a cylinder, then you're wrong. In the same way when you know only partial God and then you say that that is a whole of God then it becomes a problem. If 10 years ago, 20 years ago you understood God in a certain way, and that doesn't evolve, that doesn't change at all, after 10, 20 years, then you have to ask yourself is that really a true God to you?

Or you're fixed there. So we have to ask ourselves. Knowing God is an ongoing process until we die. Every day a new understanding of God will be revealed to you. So we looked at Ephesians 1:17-19. You come to know Him and then the eyes of your heart are enlightened. You will have hope, riches, and power. This is a process. That's what's going to happen. That's

what Saint Paul prayed for. He sees his future life, the X-Ray, he sees so well. That's what he prayed for. The Christians in Ephesians, in Acts, something like scales came off from Paul's eyes. That is embodied. Say, yes, maybe it actually happened but it is a symbolic way of saying that Paul's eyes were open. So when you look at Acts 9:18 it says: "and immediately", that's right after Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, "and immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength". *His sight was restored*; he was never blind. He was able to see fine, but his sight was restored for his insight was restored. His insight about God was restored. He became a new man and he was able to see God in a different way.

Jesus Shows Us the Living God

The reason Jesus Christ came to us was to show the living God. When people were totally enslaved by the God of law, Jesus Christ came to reveal the living God. That's why Jesus Christ came to us, not to teach us more information about God, but to reveal the living God to each of us. Revealing does not mean that everybody can see it obviously. That's not what a revelation is. There is a hidden aspect in revealing, you have to have a certain condition to be able to see what is revealed. For example, Paul did not see what he saw for the longest time and something happened within him and then he was able to see, that's what revelation is. There has to be a certain condition of the heart to be able to see what is revealed. Elizabeth Johnson defined the living God in this way: The term living God evokes the realization that there is always more to divine history than humans beings can nail down". If you nail down who God is 10 years ago and do not change, then is that the living God or a concept of God? Living God always is a realization that there is always more to divine history than human beings can nail down.

Jesus Christ came to not only save us, Jesus Christ came to save God. Jesus came to save God from stale, naive, worn out concepts to be the living God. Jesus Christ came to save God, Jesus Christ came to free God from the prison of human ideas and concepts. So Jesus Christ did not come just to save human beings, Jesus Christ came to save God and ultimately that is a way to save human beings. They have fallen into the idols. It's like living water that is always springing up and running. You know, even though Jesus Christ came to give us, to reveal to us, the living God, many people didn't get

it. Even the disciples didn't get it and we still don't get it. The disciples started something new. They didn't get it at first it, but they finally got it and they started something new. Then 2000 years later, we human beings fell into their old self. We don't get it.

I want to give you an example. It's a conversation between Jesus and Philip, one of Jesus' disciples. Jesus said, "if you know me. You will know my father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen it because Jesus Christ came to reveal the living God". That's what Jesus is saying to Phil, Phil said to him, "Lord show us the father and we will be satisfied". How frustrated Jesus must have been. Jesus just revealed the living God and then Philip is asking Lord, "show us the father and we'll be satisfied". And Jesus said, "Have I been with you all this time Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the father". How can you say "show us the father?" It was such a frustrating moment. I mean, Jesus was so frustrated. He revealed the living God, but people did not get it because their eyes are not open. Even now, a lot of people don't get it. Ultimately Philip encountered the living God. But it was hard for him to understand it at first.

Idols Within Us

We need to encounter the living God. My friends let us not be by a counterfeit God. Counterfeit money looks exactly like real money. A counterfeit God looks exactly like real God, but let's not be fooled by the counterfeit God. We human beings, strangely, have a tendency to create God instead of searching for the living God. That's strange. I do that, all of us do that. We have a tendency to create God rather than searching for the living God. I call that idol. We have idols within us. Idols look very, very attractive to you. But we create idols because it's easier, more simple, and more convenient. Idols are not a wooden sculpture that we worship. Idols are your perception, that's what idols are. Having wooden sculptures are very naive idols, but your perception, that is your idols. When we impose certain fixed perceptions, ideas, or images on God then they become idols even though they are ideas.

Yesterday, I said, God is revealed to you uniquely. That's wonderful, personally and uniquely, but when you start absolutizing the God who is revealed to you, then that becomes an idol to you. You start oppressing other people. God created us in God's image, but in the modern world, we create God in our image. God created us in God's image, we should not create God in our image. But in modern days, we create God in our image. That is not

the living God, that is a powerless concept of God. This powerless concept of God will never save you, will never make your life different. Counterfeit God only creates counterfeit religiosity, phony happiness. Almost like happiness forced upon yourself, almost like 'I have to be happy, I have to be happy', why? Why? 'Because I'm Christian, I'm supposed to be happy. It's almost like happiness being is forced upon you. That's phony happiness, when you have counterfeit God then you impose that happiness on yourself, phony happiness. Language is all there, hope, riches, and power, but they are merely concepts. The content is empty. Sometimes in other services, when they do praise, content is missing. Real hope is not there, and you say you have hope, it is not real. Idols are the personification of what you wish and what you dream. That's what idols are. From them you create God in your own image, idols are a personification of what you wish and what you dream.

Martin Buber, we talked about him a few years ago. The one who wrote *I / Thou* he wrote another book *Between Man and Man*. In that book, he said, "everyone should carefully observe what way his heart draws into". You have to carefully observe what draws your heart is heart drawn to. What is your heart drawn to? Honestly, frankly, nakedly, we have to ask ourselves, how is your heart drawn? To where is it drawn to? We have to see what is our God. Simon said, those who made them, idols right, those who make them are like them. So are all who trust in that. And then I realized that 'ah idols are not just perception, idols are not just personification of what to dream and what you want to reach; idols are yourself'. Idols are yourself. You are worse than yourself. That's what idols are. And people like to do that. Your wishes, your dreams, your desires, your greed, are all about you. Idols are God we create in our own image. We kick out the living God to create our own image.

Restore the Living God

One rabbi said, "God is not silent. God is silenced". In your life God is not silent, you have made God silent, you have silenced God. He said, "God is in exile". That's what I'm saying that Jesus came to save God because God is in exile. Nietzsche, the modern philosopher, existentialist philosopher he described this very graphically, he said: "a madman lit a lantern at noon and went into the pumping market looking for God. Where is God? Mocked by the townspeople in an escalating series of exchanges, he finally threw the lantern to the ground it shattered and its light went out, 'God is dead' cried

the madman. And we have killed him!". That's what Nietzsche saw what modern people do.

In the modern world, we don't create a space for the living God. We have kicked out God. God has been pushed out of our hearts, from this society, from this world. The only thing that is left within us is the god we created in our own image. Only concepts remain. The living God is not there, only the concept remains within us. Just the ideas of God, just the doctrine, and one's own conviction remain. When we push God away from us when we are creating God's image, what is left? A beast, only a beast. But animals with high intelligence and greed are very dangerous. Animals without intelligence or greed are non-threatening, but animals with high intelligence and greed are very dangerous. We see that all around we create nuclear missiles to destroy the whole world. What happened in Orlando? That's what human beings can do and are doing all the time. Animals with high intelligence and greed are very dangerous. It is important for us to restore the living God within us. Knowing God is restoring the living God within us.

Three Stages in Getting to Know God

So now I'd like to talk about three things in getting to know God. We can say that there are three stages. The three stages overlap each other. This is what we go through in our journey of searching for the living God. So if you really want to know the living God then this is what we need to.

Stage of Accepting Our Ignorance

The first stage is the stage of accepting our ignorance as a first stage is accepting our ignorance. We have to accept the fact that we don't know God. It is a way of casting out our idols that are made by our own prejudice, our greed, and our convenience. It is our humble attitude. This is the way to keep us from creating our own idols. Thomas Merton's prayer is, our prayer, "my God, I have no idea where I'm going". St. John of the Cross described his journey of knowing God in this way: when we humans beings reach the top of the mountain, unexpectedly, we see a huge cliff in front of you and you see many mountains in front of you. The more you think you know, the more you build". I said you know nothing.

All these spiritual giants, Thomas Merton or St. John of the cross, they are confessing that, and he said: "that's when we enter into the cloud of beyond". You start walking into the journey through the heart's desire or pain, not by

reasoning because reasoning can fool you. So you can search for God with your heart's desire and or pain. We have to accept our ignorance, but there are two kinds of ignorance: acknowledged ignorance and unacknowledged ignorance. The ignorance that you do not even know that you don't know is unacknowledged ignorance. But ignorance that you know that you don't know is acknowledged ignorance, see the difference?

Unacknowledged Ignorance

When you read the Bible, Jesus often encountered unacknowledged ignorance. They don't even know that they don't know. Many religious leaders Jesus encountered were those, but unacknowledged ignorance is dangerous because it's a different animal from acknowledged ignorance. Unacknowledged ignorance often accompanies violence. The people who live with unacknowledged ignorance, they're violent, because they have to protect themselves. They don't want to admit that they know so they are violent, they are aggressive. These people ultimately killed Jesus. What did Jesus say on the cross? "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing". They do not even know what they don't know. Unacknowledged ignorance killed Jesus. Unacknowledged ignorance always brings violence and this kind of ignorance is total blindness. That is a kind of blindness St. Paul had before he met Christ. He thought he knew everything, but he did not even know what he did not know.

They thought they knew or not but they did not know what they're supposed to know, they shouldn't know. Once Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath and to the Jewish religious leaders, the people who have ideas of God, the concept of God, it didn't make sense. How could you heal a man on Sabbath? They said "You are a sinner! How can a sinner heal the blind man? That's not possible!" So they asked the blind man, "Were you really blind?" and the blind man replied, "Yes, I was blind". The religious leaders said, "I cannot believe you, bring your parents". So they asked the parents, "was he really born blind?" and the parents were scared. They said, "he is old enough, ask him!" and they left. So the leaders came back and said "He's a sinner. Jesus is a sinner because he healed on Sabbath". Then the blind man said, "My friends I don't know whether he's a sinner or not but one thing I know for sure is that I was blind, but I see now, what else do you want?" That's unacknowledged ignorance. What did Jesus say at the end? "If you were blind you would not have sinned, but now that you say you see, your sin remains." Your sin remains meaning you're still blind. The man who was

born a blind man was not the real blind man. The real blind men were the Pharisees who thought they saw, who thought that they knew. They did not even know they did not know. That's unacknowledged ignorance.

This kind of blindness comes from religious convictions, so religious people, be very careful because if you're not careful that leads to unacknowledged ignorance. It comes from over-dependency on your reason. Smart people be very careful. It comes from stubborn pride, and it comes from insatiable greed and strong narcissism. These things create and cause unacknowledged ignorance. But as we enter into the awesome and mysterious world of God we realize how little we know compared to the wonderful awesome world of God. That's when you start seeing that you don't know much. When you see true light, you see your darkness. When you see true righteousness, you see your own imperfection and simpleness and selfishness. When you see true love, then you'll see your own selfishness.

Letter to the Romans is all about that. Do you want to find out more about that? Read letters to Romans. He's talking about acknowledged ignorance. He said, "I don't understand myself. I try to do good, but when I look at myself, I'm doing exactly the opposite of the good. I keep doing evil, I don't understand myself". That's acknowledged ignorance. It's not "I understand myself" because he saw a bigger thing. That's when you see the need for God's grace. You recognize that 'I need God's grace to survive. I need God's grace to live'. That's when you can recognize your own ignorance.

Jacob had a problem with his brother Esau. They were twins, Jacob and Esau. But Esau was a hunter, he went out and he lived like a man. Jacob was like a mama's boy, he stayed home all day. But mom liked Jacob so he cheated at all kinds of things, and he got the blessing. But as a result of that blessing, he was kicked out. He had to run away from home because Esau was trying to kill him. So he ran away. When he got to the wilderness, he was sleeping and in the cold night in the wilderness, he finally realized "ah God is right here". God has always been with him, but on that cold night in the wilderness, in the desert, he found God. This is what he said: "surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it". that's acknowledged ignorance. "The Lord is here, but I did not know it". You know, God is always with us and many times we don't recognize God, you know the question 'Where is God?' is a fish swimming in water asking "where is water?" Once we had a retreat to Algonquin. Every year, 20, 30 young people went and we'd go into

the interior. So we got to the North Tea lake and we parked the car and we rented the canoe and then we go in. So about two hours we were canoeing to find the island then all of a sudden Susie asked, "are we there at Algonquin yet?" We've been there the whole time! It's like the "where is God" question and like a fish asking, "where is water?" God is always with us always around us, but sometimes we don't recognize that.

The prodigal son, only when he had to eat the pig's meal, he recognized how little he knew and how arrogant he was. He didn't know. Now he knew how much there was in father's house. Sometimes when we encounter a crisis that paralyzes us and experience failure that drives us into helplessness and face problems that seemingly have no solution, our eyes open. I don't know why. When we encounter those situations, our eyes all of a sudden open and see our own ignorance. We are so stubborn sometimes that we don't see until something hits us. Only then we acknowledge how little we know.

Acknowledged Ignorance

The story of a father, who had an epileptic son, he threw himself into the fire into the water and all that. He came to the disciples and asked: "please heal my son?" And the disciples could not heal him, and he came to Jesus, and he asked, "Jesus if can, can you heal my son?" And Jesus said, "what do you mean if you can? Nothing is impossible with God?" And then he got desperate. And he was afraid that he might have offended Jesus and then he said, "I believe, I believe." Then Jesus said, "For those who believe nothing is impossible". And then the man said, "I believe" and immediately after that he said, "help my unbelief." That "help my unbelief" is acknowledged ignorance. We all need to have that, "Lord, I don't know you, can you please help me see you? Help me know you, help me experience you. I don't know you." Like Thomas Merton, "I don't know where I'm going"; "can you please help me?". That's acknowledging ignorance. An early church father, Anselm said a very wise truth. He said, "For I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe that unless I believe I shall not understand." How wise that is. It is not knowledge that brings faith, it is faith that brings knowledge.

Only through that faith can you know God. Faith is not just religious activity, it's not religious sentiment either, it's not religious knowledge. For Paul, all of these things had blinded Paul: religious sentiment, religious knowledge, and religious activity. These things totally blinded Paul. To me, faith is kind of

acknowledged ignorance and from that comes a strong desire to know God. When you have that acknowledged ignorance it leads to strong desire know God. When you have unacknowledged ignorance it leads you to violence. Or when you have acknowledged ignorance that leads you to a strong desire to know God and from that strong desire you can know God. 'As a deer pants for the water, our soul thirsts for the living God'. In other words, in you, deconstruction has to happen first before reconstruction begins. You have to have a deconstruction process first for the reconstruction to begin. Unlearning has to happen first before the real learning can come. All our prejudice stubbornness and arrogance have to crumble down before the journey of knowing the living God begins. Idols have to be destroyed first for the true living God to come.

We are created in God's image. Let us not create God in our own image. When we reflected on Abraham, when do you think he really started the journey of knowing the living God? When do you think he really started the journey of knowing the living God? When he had to sacrifice his son Isaac, because it didn't make sense, until that time everything made sense, but that moment it didn't make sense. That's why Kierkegaard wrote a whole book on that. That is the moment when he truly encountered his acknowledged ignorance. "I don't understand this God. I don't really understand this God." That's when the real journey began. God who asked Abraham to sacrifice his own son, was God beyond our ethics, custom, thinking and common sense, that's the kind of God Paul experienced too. At that moment he realized that he didn't really know God. All his ideas of God were shattered all his concepts of God were shattered. He was a man who worshiped the idols in them. They were full of concepts of a God who would give him prosperity. Those ideas were totally shattered when God asked him to sacrifice his own son.

When Abraham was challenged with problems he could not solve with his own resources, Abraham finally had to lay down his well-defined concept about God. Then what did he learn about the living God? He learned Jehovah-Jireh. That's "God provides". That is the God he encountered, the living God. Then he lived with that living God all the time he always believed that God provides. Whenever difficulties come whenever dilemmas come, whenever the paradox comes, he always knew that God will provide. That's the living God he encountered. And he lived with that living God, not with the concept of God.

The first stage is the most important stage because the living God is not what you acquire. The living God comes when you lay down all your manipulation. The coming to the living God is God's gift, not your effort.

Stage of Seeking

So second and third stages are pretty simple. The second stage is a stage of seeking. The prophet Jeremiah said, " 'Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord,'" Without seeking the living God we can never get to know God. God reveals himself to those who seek God. But things are when you have acknowledged ignorance it leads to the desire to seek, so the second stage almost happens naturally. When the first stage happens the second stage happens naturally. Elizabeth Johnson said in her book, *Quest for the Living God*, she said, "in every aspect, human freedom, like reason, is a dynamism that keeps on transcending beyond everything it grasps." Wonderful. She's a wonderful theologian.

Human freedom is like that. You don't just settle with what you know. Once you know it moves forward, to understand further. Jesus said, "you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." You know, that's the message that I got when I did praise this evening, set people free from their concept of God. Why are you scared to let go of those useless concepts that don't do anything for you? Set people free from those useless concepts and let them find the living God. That living God will save them, the truth shall set you free, I want you to be free. Why are you so scared? Do you think God will punish you? God wants you to need him in a real way. That's what God wants. And we need to be free. Now with that freedom, we keep knocking, we keep seeking. Part of the reason you don't see, you don't knock, is because other people say God is like this but I don't believe that. Find your own God. Nobody can dictate who God is you. She also said this, "human spirit is characterized by an unrestricted drive towards the truth, which is ultimately boundless". That should be our life.

With an unrestricted drive, we refuse to stay within the small world we already know. Don't stay within the small world you already know. You think that's safe? That's not safe. In life, if you don't take the journey, you die. We strive towards the bigger world, we do not yet know that is seeking. That is a lifestyle Jesus taught us to emulate. "Ask and it will be given to you search

and you'll find, knock and the door will be opened you. For everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches finds for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened". When you seek, when you search, when you knock you will find it.

I guarantee that you'll find it the living God. You will find a God who matters to you. A God for whom you would sacrifice everything. A God who has no effect on you, why do you need that God? Why do you need that kind of God? That's the only concept of God, not the real God. We'll meet the living God when we have a seeking attitude. The Prophet Jeremiah also said, "call to me and I'll answer you and I will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." What you have not known, God will reveal to you. 'Call to me'.

Stage of Waiting

The last stage is a stage of waiting. You have acknowledging ignorance, you seek and you wait. Knowing God is not a result of our efforts. It's not even the result of our seeking. I'm not saying that our efforts are useless, but I'm saying that knowing God is not the automatic result of our efforts. Knowing God is only by God's grace. If God does not reveal himself to us we cannot know God, and we thank God because God has a strong desire to reveal himself or herself to us. He even sent Jesus Christ to reveal. So in knowing God, there's an active part and a passive part. The active part is seeking, searching and knocking. The passive part is waiting. The journey of knowing God is a cycle of active and passive process continuously. We seek and wait, we search and wait, we knock and wait. That should be our journey of knowing God. The living God is enveloped in mystery. We pursue, but we wait until the mystery is unveiled. We do not know how God will change us. We do not know that. We don't know how God will change each person. You will hear the testimony tomorrow. God changes us in the way we can't possibly fathom or imagine, God is beyond our imagination. This is not a statement of our limitation, but it's a statement of God's limitlessness. God is beyond our imagination that is. Isaiah saw that very well, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts". It's wonderful, isn't it? In our pursuit of knowing God, we enter into the endless and limitless world of God. That's why we don't make conclusions or make closure on our own. We wait. We wait for what kind of world God will show us.

The other day I was shocked that Britain is gonna leave EU. I never even imagined for 48 years. They are leaving EU, and what kind of world we'll see, we don't know. Life itself is a mystery. Everything has time. God planted his seed within us. There is the time the seed will break out of the shell. That's when we truly meet the living God and know God. That's why the song said, "be still and know that I'm God". He knew what it meant to wait. Be still and know that I am God. Every day this waiting has to be there. The process of letting our prejudice down, seeking, and waiting.

Discover God

You know what's more important in the waiting stage? It's listening, in the waiting stage the most important thing is listening. God speaks to each of us differently, so we will hear different things. Also, our understanding will be all different. We won't have a whole understanding of God, but it will be our authentic experience and knowledge of God. Isn't that kind of exciting? Searching for the real God, the living God who matters to you? Instead of just holding onto the concept of God that you already knew. God is going to reveal himself or herself to you in a very fresh way and understanding that will be exciting. Saint Paul experienced and lived an exciting life. He died of persecution but until then he lived an exciting life. I would prefer to live an exciting life for one or two years rather than going ten years always scared, without knowing who God is. Knowing God is knowing ourselves because we are created in God's image. Knowing God is also discovering yourself. It is to discover the essence of life. It is to discover the beauty of life. It is to discover the mystery of life knowing God is eternal life. "and this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ who whom we have sent", that's how John saw eternal life, I hope all of you live eternal life and have that eternal life.

A close-up, soft-focus photograph of pink cherry blossoms serves as the background. The petals are a vibrant pink, and the stamens are a deeper red. The lighting is warm, creating a gentle, romantic atmosphere. In the center, there is a white rectangular box with a thin grey border, containing the title and author's name.

You and I

Rev. In-Kee Kim

You and I: Part 1

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

I hope that this is the most memorable retreat for all of us, especially this time since we're going to focus on relationships. A relationship is something that we all have, and that is what I like to see. A relationship is what we are all interested in, but how little we really know about relationships. We always have some relationships with people, but how little we think about them, the dynamics or the meaning of a relationship. Everything is a relationship and relationships affects us the most, more than anything else. In almost every moment of our lives, relationships affect us and yet we are very ignorant of the dynamics of a relationship. So for the next three days, we're going to explore together three different aspects of relationships. Tonight I'm going to talk about me, the person, I can be only understood in the context of the relationships we have. In the second lecture, I'm going to focus on if I can only be understood in the context of the relationship, what is that relationship that shapes me and defines me, and that is what I'm going to focus on tomorrow morning. Tomorrow night I'm going to focus on what should be our attitude and the third lecture will be short because it is a practical suggestion, but I'd like to hear more from you. So first you will hear two lectures and then, of course, I will give some meat to it, but you will think about it, what will be the best, what would be the most appropriate attitude to have a good relationship? So we will discuss together and you will explore together and we'll learn from each other.

So the last night, I hope that we can talk a lot. So each group talks about what we learned, what kind of attitude we should have to keep good relationships. So today, of course, I'm going to talk about Christian relationships. Christians are not the only ones who have relationships, everybody has a relationship, but of course, I'm going to reflect on the relationship from a Christian point of view, or rather, biblical point of view. What does the Bible say? What does the Bible say about the relationships that we have? I hope that we can all learn about relationships and share what you think about relationships, especially from a biblical point of view. The first proposition: I can be only understood in the context of the relationship we have.

Who am I?

Who am I is a question we all ask. Who am I, and what is this "I"? We question a lot about this "I". Who am I? We always ask this question, who am I? However this "I" does not exist in isolation, by itself. This "I" always exists in relationships. "I" cannot be defined on its own. God stands alone. God said, "I am who I am." Yahweh, in English, is called Jehovah. Yahweh came from the phrase, "I am who I am." When Moses met God in a burning Bush, "What is your name?" Moses asked and then God said, "I am who I am," Yahweh, and from there most Bible translations, they called it Lord Jehovah, Yahweh, that's where the name came from. I'm going to talk about it a little later to even God stands alone, but even God does not stand alone in that sense, but God can stand alone, but we, cannot stand alone. I can be understood always by the relationship that I have. So I'm connected with all these people like a matrix. When we tried to understand "I" as a separate unconnected being, I don't understand what this is, it's only a concept, but, when I see "I" in a relationship, then we can see what it is. As an example, let us look at oxygen. Oxygen by itself is hard to understand what it is, but when oxygen is understood in its relationship with the other elements, then we can see what it is. What is H₂O? Becomes water.

So by yourself, it's hard to understand. But when we connect them with our other elements, ah, that's what it looks like, but in the same way "I" by itself. It's hard to see what it is, but when we understand "I" in the context of my relationship with others, ah! This "I" looks like this, we can see that little bit. The whole universe exists in relationship. They moved together in relating to each other. I mean Galileo had a trouble because he said that "oh, it's not the sun that is moving. It is the earth that is moving." Well, you know, modern scientists say that Sun and Earth are moving in relation. It's not that one is fixed and the other moves depending on the frame of reference, both move, but they move in a relationship. So a whole universe moves in a relationship.

"I"

Let's see who I am. Let's say I'm a son or a daughter without relationships with parents, we cannot say that I'm a son or a daughter before I say that I'm a daughter. My relationship with my mother has to be established because I cannot be a daughter by myself, can you? You can't be a daughter by yourself. You can only be a daughter with your relationship with your mother. When I say I'm a doctor, I cannot say that without my relationship, with my

patients. I cannot say that I'm a doctor. I was born as a result of the relationship. I was born in a relationship and I live in relationship. My identity is intimately connected with the relationship that I have. So the theme of this retreat is you and I, the relationship that we are going to talk about. An African saying, there's an African saying "I am because you are."

I am because you are and because we are, I am. That's how they understand "I", I am. Because you are because we are. They don't think of "I" on its own. Always. They understood "I" in the context of the relationship with others. In other words, "I" is connected. "I" is connected with you. They didn't see "I" as a separated, individual unit, but a connected one, "I" in the rugged individualism. "I", as an autonomous, unconnected self, sufficient being. I think that's an illusion. When we think about "I" separate from everything else, autonomous, self-sufficient and unconnected being. I think that's an illusion. Sometimes we think of salvation, I go to heaven. We only think of heaven in terms of "I" going to the heaven, so very individualistic. I exist all by itself without really realizing he is very much connected with all the people around you.

Without you, "I" does not exist because you are, "I" am in Christianity is not just human being that exists in relationship, in Christianity, in the Bible, even God exists in relationship. That's what Trinity is all about. God in three, one in three, three in one. Oh, we are not going to deal with the complex theory of Trinity. All I want to say is that God, the father, God the son, and God, the Holy Spirit exists in a dynamic relationship with each other. Today we are going to read the scripture and think about these three persons do not exist in isolation. In the dynamic relationship, they interact with each other and they exist in perfect harmony. Did the relationship they have is not a dead static relationship? But a dynamic living relationship. They work together in perfect harmony.

God's Nature

Lecture on note one, John Fourteen. 10. When you look at it, do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me? See, I am in the father. Jesus is in the father and the father is in Jesus. The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own, but the father who dwells in me does his works. So father and Jesus are very connected. Even the word Jesus speaks is the word that God, the father gives from within.

I mean it's hard to understand all the dynamics, but what we need to understand at this moment is that the father and son, Jesus very connected and the Jesus uses language like I am in the father and the father is in me, not separated being. I am alone. I'm by myself, but I am in the father and the father is in me, and also when you look at the next verse, that is the relationship with the Holy Spirit, John Sixteen, 13 to 15. When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, the spirit, he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears and he will declare to you the things there are to come. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

All that the father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. When you look at it, the son and the Holy Spirit, they are connected they are not speaking on their own. They are not speaking their own opinions. They are in perfect harmony. They are speaking things together. The father gives to the son, and the son gives to the spirit, and the spirit speaks, but that was spirit speaks is connected to the father and connected with the son. So when you look at God, all three persons are moving in perfect harmony. I mean you don't know. I mean you said God's realm is, is hard to understand what is going on there, but what we can see is that there is a movement, perfect movement, perfect harmony in God. So God is not alone. God works in a relationship. They're tremendous, intimate relationships going on in God's realm. So the Trinity is not about mathematics. Three in one and one in three. The main point about the Trinity is that God exists in relationship. That's what the Christianity proclaims. That's what the Bible proclaims. The God exists in relationship. They exist. They work, they move in perfect harmony. They are distinct persons, distinct persons, but not divided, but united in one through perfect relationship. We are a distinct individual, but we are not divided. We are not separated. We are connected together. This oneness, oneness of harmony.

That is God's nature, the creation of God also is in a relationship. Everything that God made is in a relationship. For example, the whole universe that God created and the whole universe exists in relationship. He cannot exist all by itself. It all exists in relationship to human beings were created in God's image I mean. Do we have to think about what does it mean to be created in God's image? There are three things, substantive, functional and relational. Are those three things are the ones most people talked about. I'm not going to talk about much of it. Substantive is a rational being, and then functional things. God takes care of the creation in the same way we human beings a

take care of creation there or one is relational that God is so we are created in God's image. The most powerful statement about us being created in God's image is that as God is in a relationship, we are also in a relationship because we are created in God's image, so it is not a matter of whether I want relationship or not. It is the order of God's creation that we all human beings may be in a relationship. What did Jesus say? The greatest commandment was, what is the greatest commandment? Jesus said,

Do Not Use God and Others for Personal Gain

Love your neighbour as yourself. What is the greatest commandment? It's to have a relationship, to have a relationship with God, and to have a relationship with neighbours, and the characteristic of that relationship is love, God is great. Jesus' greatest commandment is to have a relationship for all of us to have a great relationship, not just relationships, but a great relationship with God and a great relationship with one another. That's God's greatest commandment. The most important thing then the disobedience is that instead of building a relationship, use each other for the sake of building one's ego and benefits. That's the greatest disobedience. Instead of building a relationship with God and with each other? You use God and each other for your benefits and for your own personal ego. Then that is the greatest disobedience. Instead of loving God and loving neighbour, use God and use neighbour for yourself. The greatest sin is not just a moral failure, oh, I did this, I did that.

The Greatest Sin

The greatest sin is not a just moral failure. The greatest sin is to use other people only to satisfy one's self-centred agenda, doesn't matter what you do. The greatest sin and greatest disobedience is using others and also use God only to satisfy one's self-centred agenda. Others become only tools to get what I want. All I want is me and all others exist only as tools to satisfy what I need. That is the greatest sin. That is the greatest disobedience. When we look at God's greatest commandment is to have a relationship with one another. There is, I mean in that kind of attitude, there is no real relationship. I mean you don't know what, what relationship is, but only self-centred and self-interested agenda. This self is corrupt self. The self is corrupted self and this kind of false identity. When you live with this kind of false identity, then you will have a false relationship with reality. When you fall into your corrupt

itself and false identity, then you will relate to the world in a false way, totally corrupted way.

Dispensable Tools

This self-does not have to be one individual. Sometimes it is collective. I, for example, for example, Naziism that is collective "I" for us. We use everybody else to move forward our own agenda and our own interest and that is the greatest sin and greatest disobedience. Others become easily dispensable. Oh, if you're there, if you're not there, I will find somebody else. They are always dispensable. You move from one friend to another from one human being to another human being. As long as my needs are met, I don't care who that is, so other people become dispensable. They are not at all connected with me. They are just there to serve my needs. There is no understanding of because you are, I am. There is no you and I. There is only I, I and I in this self-centeredness, we see a tremendous fear that I don't matter at all.

That's why I try to make myself visible so hard. That's why you become more and more self-centred and then you create this false identity, St Paul described us as for what? St Paul describes the church as what? Body. St. Paul Describe our existence as the body. We don't exist by ourselves. We are the body of Christ. I am a part of a body and I am connected with all other parts of the body. The hands cannot say to the feet, I don't need you because they both are part of the body. One part of the body hurts. Then the whole body hurts. What does this say? This is very much the idea of because you are I am because you are. I am without you. I am not. So we are very connected in that way.

Embrace Imperfection

Only when hands are connected with a body, and their hands, then there's a function. Here's a living a reality there, but hands by themselves, they don't mean anything. in the same way, the same thing, when we exist all by ourselves, it doesn't mean much, but when we are connected with each other than it has meaning. Soren Kierkegaard, an existentialist philosopher, said in his work of love in his book a work of love, I have a quotation. "Their true love does not embrace others in spite of their flaws as if are rising above them. Rather he finds the other lovable in spite of and together with his weaknesses and errors and imperfections. Because of your beloveds

weakness, you shall not remove yourself from him or make your relationship or remote. On the contrary, the two of you shall hold together with greater solidarity and inwardness in order to remove weakness."

So, what he's saying is you're not just accepting other people in spite of their weaknesses, but when you are connected, you work together to overcome each other's weaknesses. So it is our responsibility to help each other to overcome their own weaknesses. When God created the world every day, he said, after creation he said, it is good. Whatever he created, it is good, but only once in creation. His creation story, only once God said: "It is not good." When did he say that? It is not good, that man should be alone. That's only time God said that it is not good. That's a genesis two. 18, so Lord created eve. it's not that Adam needed a romance because he's all by himself. He is not good. He needs Romance. He needs a woman. That's not what the scripture is saying. When God created eve does not simply mean that he created another human being by creating another human being. What is God really doing is that God created a relationship by creating Eve. He did not just create another human being. God created a relationship with Adam. Adam needed the relationship so in that sense,

Rethink your Perception of Relationships

one plus one is not equal to two. One plus one is equal to three. That is Adam is created, eve is created and Adam this created, created and the relationship is created So one plus one is equal to three. By creating eve, God created the relationship. I think that's more important. Creation is not just the creation of the physical and material things. People understanding of creation is more focused on the quality of creation. By creating the relationship, our life is more beautiful. By creating a relationship. Adam's life is much, much more beautiful and fulfilling. Sometimes we see things only literally, so we don't get the beautiful meaning behind it. Once at Oxford University, a professor in English class professor gave a test. Okay, can a story. Jesus turning water into wine. I want you to make your own interpretation. And then he gave the class for one hour.

Everybody was writing about what that means, that God, Jesus turned water into wine and there was one guy, he was just sitting there looking out the window and then he didn't do anything for a whole hour and just before the exam was over, he wrote something, and he wrote this. The conscious water saw its God and blushed. He just simply said one sentence and he got the

Conscious water, saw his God and blushed. Adam and Eve. The important thing is what kind of relationship were they in. Adam and Eve were created, but what kind of relationship, were they in that's more important, that's what more important if they were fighting all the time, that's a curse rather than a blessing. Adam and Eve, after they were created, what did Adam say? He said in Genesis 2:23, this, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. It's not just messaging about a married couple its a passage used often at the marriage ceremony but, it's not just about marriage, the quality of the relationship. The first human beings had your bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh and the quality of the first relationship? The first relationship human beings had was this beautiful. And the relationship, the first human beings had was this beautiful bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. They were in perfect harmony. They have become one, in the self-centred person who is in the center, "I" is in the center. But, when the relationship of you and I,

Treat Everyone as your Equal

when the relationship between you and I are created, when you're all by yourself, "I" is a center. But when the relationship between you and I are created, what is in the center and is the center, the Self-centred person doesn't see is so absorbed in themselves. When true relationship is created, they start seeing the importance of and, you and I is the important thing is, and it's not "I", I'm not using you to fulfill my needs for what is important is the relationship that we are building. That's what's more important than my needs. So, the center changes when the true relationship is built, not "you", not "I", we are created to live in this relationship. We are not meant to be autonomous self-centred individuals. We are created to continuously build relationship with each other. Because of humans, these relationships were destroyed, and Jesus came to restore this relationship, Jesus called his disciples and said, "I'll be your friend. So, our relationship will be friendship. I will not call you servants anymore. You and I are friends." and he said, "what good friend does, good friend sacrificed his life for his friend. That's what friends are like." He showed what true friendship is. Now all of you are now called to be disciples of Jesus Christ then means being a disciple of Jesus Christ means to live your life building a good quality relationship. Be a friend to each other like Jesus did.

The kind of relationship you have with others will shape you and form you will shape the kind of person you become. If you're in an abusive relationship,

then that will shape you as a certain person, but as you are in a very self-centered relationship that will shape you to become a self-centered person from when you're young, you had been shaped by the relationship that you have consciously or unconsciously made from when you're young. You were shaped by your parents, by the relationship you had with your parents and different kinds of friends over the years have shaped you to be who you are now. you may know or may not know, but the kinds of friends you have had all these years have shaped you in a certain way and all kinds of people you have associated with your colleagues, the people who loved you, who respected you, have shaped you in a certain way.

If I didn't do the ministry, I would have had different relationships with the people and I would have become a very different person. Now the quality of relationships I have is a quality of who I am. There was a guy that I have counselled many years ago, a council for several months. he had a big problem with drugs. He was addicted, and by the time, he came to me, he was a really, really heavily addicted to drugs, and so I met with him every week. I mean his face, his skin, everything just changed quite a bit because of drug addiction. So, I, met him, every week, and then, he also developed an antisocial behaviour. so, whenever we met, he always had a fight with people, an antisocial behaviour, and he had a really difficult time surviving in the society. He calls at any time, sometimes. Ten o'clock, 11:00. Doesn't matter. Whenever he feels like talking, he calls me and then, he starts talking until one, 2:00 and then I don't get to say anything. He just talks, talks, talks for about two, three hours. I get nervous. "Oh my goodness, what am I going to do if I answer it or not?", but I had no choice. I'm a minister. I'm supposed to respond to that, you know. So I received a phone call and then he starts talking. Oh, my goodness. Oh, when is it going to end? I mean, he, he applies for a job, he is a mechanic. He gets a job and because of his antisocial behaviour in a week he gets fired and when he gets fired, he calls me.

Do Not Blame Others

All you said was all about blaming everyone, none of his own problems. Everybody else sees the all bad, you know, they did this, Oh, a, I did that for about several months and then he was getting little, little, little, little, a little bit better, but almost I felt hopeless and helpless. See, I cannot just go on like this. I have my own life too, you know, I cannot once a, once a week I can't do this. And then, and then, after he left the church and he left me, I was very sad. But also, relieved a little too, but sadder, right? Because I

couldn't really help him, but we've built a friendship. So after a while, he came back to me one day, he said, "Reverend, can you marry me? Can you marry me? This Friday." That was Thursday or something like that when he asked me. "Tomorrow. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Of course. Do you have any witness?" He said "No, I don't have any. Also, I just called to two of my Bible Study Group. You will be with this. So I did the wedding and then she was about 20 years older than him.

Embrace Others No Matter What

She really changed him, the relationship he had with her through her. I mean she's much older, but she understood what he was going through. She, she was the only one who could understand him. Everybody else was so judgmental. They could not help him. Well, she was able to handle that. So she was changing his life radically.

Relationships Reshape Us

I didn't see him for about two, three years. And then one day he called me again and then

"reverend I want to bring my baby. You're the first person I want to show. Then he brought a baby. Wow, the kind of relationship we can shape. Wow. The beautiful relationships you create can shape the person in a beautiful way. When we build a new relationship with God, he will have a profound impact not only on you but also on your relationship with others. So who I am and the relationship I have are influencing each other. St Paul, after he met Christ in a real way, he met God in a real way. He said this, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." This is what Saint Paul said. He didn't say, Oh before I'm at God, I was this bad. But after I met God, I'm this good Now, that is exactly opposite of what, you know, the, what Saint Paul said, I do not understand.

I mean, before he said I'm good but now after meeting Christ, he said, I do not understand myself because I did not do the good I want, but the evil that I didn't want to do that I do what does that mean? Paul was able to see himself in a naked way. He was awakened by his true self. He was not scared of his own darkness. That's courage, isn't it? He knew that his darkness cannot destroy him. That's confidence, isn't it? He knew the power of God's grace working within him when he truly met God in a real way and build a

real relationship with God. He was able to accept himself, no matter who he was, that is a power of grace, and then he became a very humble person and he saw others weaknesses and he could have empathy and compassion, and he lived his life with thankfulness.

Transformation Through God

The point is, depending on what kind of relationship we have with God, we can have tremendous transformation within us, but you have very fearful relationship with God that will shape you in a different way when you have very superficial relationship with God that will shape you in a different way, but St Paul had a real relationship with God and that shaped him and showed him God's grace. The transformation so powerful. St Paul said in Christ we are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come. That transformation was so powerful that he was even able to say that we are a new creation. When we are comfortable with ourselves. We'll be comfortable with our relationship. We don't need to be so defensive. We don't need to be so judgmental. We don't need to be so angry all the time. You don't need to live with a victim mentality.

Now. When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although it was not Jesus himself, but his disciples who baptized, he left Judea and started back to Galilee, but he had to go through Samaria, so he came to a Samaritan city, near the plot of the ground that Jacob had given to his son. Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus tired out by his journey was sitting by the well, it was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, give me a drink.

His disciples had gone to the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "how was it that you a Jew ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria, Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans." Jesus answered her "If you knew the gift of God, who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink. You would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water are you greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks, drank from it." Jesus said to her, "everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I give

will give them, will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water. Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come back.” The woman answered, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “you’re right in saying, I have no husband where you have had five husbands and the only one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true.” The woman said to him, “sir I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem?” Jesus said to the woman, “believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews, but the hour is coming and is nowhere.”

When the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father seeks such as these to worship him, Lord in spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming who is called Christ. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us. Jesus said to her, I am he the one who is speaking to you. Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, what do you want or why are you speaking with her? The woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, come and see a man who has told me everything I have ever done. He cannot be the Messiah. Can he? They left the city and were on their way to him.

This Samaritan woman, she came out to draw water at 12:00 at noon, but in Jewish, a climate, you don't come out at 12:00 too hot. So most women came out in the morning, early in the morning when it is cool. She came out at 12. Why she didn't want to meet anybody. At first when Jesus approached her, her rejection, you are men and you are a Jew. Why do you talk to me immediately? Just herself is very off. In other words, she did not want to associate with anybody. She was living in isolation. Jesus try to keep talking to her? But she was shut off. She didn't say anything. Finally, Jesus, Jesus had no way, But to say that you have five husbands and then she was shocked. Nobody knew. And then Jesus knew.

Transformation Creates Confidence

And from then on she started talking to her and then Jesus was talking to her as though she was a colleague. Jesus was talking about worship. Jesus was talking about salvation. Jesus was talking about the end of the world. Jesus was talking about Messiah all this important theological stuff. Jesus was talking with this Samaritan woman. She was engaged in that conversation. At the end of that conversation, she was transformed. How do you know? She threw away the water bucket and where did she go? She went to the town to meet people and talk to them about this Messiah. These are the people she did not want to meet. That's why she came out at 12:00 and noon, but after the meeting, after building a relationship with Jesus Christ, she experienced tremendous transformation. She threw away that jar and she went back to the town and met people and related to them. When we meet God in a real way, then we can come out of the closet. We can come out of the isolation and only then we can build a relationship with others. When we, when I used to teach them the baptism, this is what I drew. I'm not a good drawer.

You are alone and you die with Christ, When you rise with Christ, you are connected with people, you're alone, but now you are in a relationship and that's what real spiritual formation does. Before you were scared of people, now you overcome. They overcame that fear and now you can relate to people in a meaningful way. St Dorothea of Gaza??. You're. You have that picture there, right? When you're closer to God you can get closer to each other. When you get closer to each other, you get closer to God. They are both connected so you cannot meet God separately. When you're closer to God, your relationship becomes closer and when your relationship becomes closer, you can get closer to God. Thanks.

Love is Not Always About Feelings

Love is not always about how you feel. Love is the way I exist in the world. It is my attitude towards the world and to others. Rainer Maria Rilke said this, for a human being to love another human being that is perhaps the most difficult tasks that have been entrusted to us. The ultimate task, the final test, and proof the work for which all other work is mere preparation. The most liberated person is the person who is free to love that freedom is the greatest freedom one can enjoy from this freedom. The most beautiful relationship can be created. An authentic relationship comes from this freedom.

Authentic relationships are different from codependency. Codependency is not bonding, but it is entanglement. It does not free us. It binds us. We are called to build meaningful relationships. The spiritual journey is a journey to make this relationship. Jesus called us and said, now I'll make you fishers of people

Do Not Take Relationships For Granted

we can't take the relationship for granted. We cannot treat, treat each other with our raw emotion. We cannot treat each other with our greed, selfishness, self-centeredness, indifference, arrogance and rudeness because these things destroy the relationship, not only what we do, but our inner attitude can destroy the relationship. Our judgment or attitude deeply seeded anger insecurity and all these things destroy our relationship to build a relationship. It takes time, energy, money, and everything. You don't just throw away. I have to build a relationship. For example, you spend so much time and energy, you save a certain amount in the bank account. The next day we'll just. We'll just throw it away. You will not a relationship, the same thing. It takes time, energy and money to build a relationship. Just because you were ticked off, just because you're a little upset, you throw away the relationship that's dumb. We can't do that. Sometimes we do that why? because we think that, oh, I can always have a relationship with anybody if not her somebody else, but the relationship to build another relationship. It takes that much time to build by throwing a throwing away relationship like that. We are back to zero. You have to start all over again. Your friendship or your relationship?

One person at night. I mean in the. In the morning before sunrise, a human out and then on the shore at the shore, he was walking around but he couldn't see anything. Pitch dark still in the morning. Oh, and then some he hits something. It's some kind of package kind of pebbles. So he was bored. So he took out one pebble and threw it and counted how many times you could do that. He throws away all day and then while he was doing that, the sun started rising and he had about three pebbles left and then he saw it wasn't pebble. It was diamond all this time. He throw it all the diamonds into the ocean. The only thing that he had was three times three diamonds. Sometimes relationships like that. Not thinking that was a diamond we threw away one by one for fun and the only thing that is left, not even three, one or two in a lot of people live a lonely life at the end of their life, no friends anymore. They're just by themselves because they throw away. They throw away all the relationship they have only their spouse. No one left a

relationship is precious. How often we take that as a useless, insignificant pebble, pebble, and throw away Jesus related to the sick Jesus related to the lepers, the tax collectors, adulterers, prostitute, the sinners. He treats them as the most precious people in the world. He knew the price. he knew the priceless value of relationships. Guitar \$700,

Mike. \$300, water, \$2, relationship priceless. You are mysteriously precious. Each person is mysteriously precious. When we discover the treasure and they relate to each other in a meaningful way and you're fulfilling Lord's mission. That's what God wants to do. God created each and every one of us mysteriously precious and we don't see that and we treat each other like a garbage. When is a precious diamond? When we discover that beauty and preciousness and relate to each other in a meaningful way, then our life will turn around. It'll be more, much, much more abundant and blessed life when we are able to build a relationship in a new way. So this is it for tonight first tonight, tomorrow I'm going to talk about then what is that relationship?

You and I: Part 2

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

Yesterday, we said Adam and Eve were created, and the important thing is not that Adam and Eve were there. The important thing that I wanted to emphasize was that "and" was created. The relationship was created from that moment on, we are born to live in relationship. Through this "and", Adam comes alive, and through this "and", Eve comes out. So the important thing is the "and", not Adam or Eve, but the important thing is the "and". That is what's important and also in our relationship "I" and "you". How can I overcome my own "I" so that I can build this "and"? When this "and" is built, I come alive and you come alive, but we are focused so much on "I" that we kill end and when the "and" is killed, then "I" is killed and "you" is killed. Both are destroyed. The important thing is that I cannot be "I" be without "you". I am because you are. Because we are, I am, so this "I" can only possibly survive with this "and".

Connecting "You" and "I"

I really liked that song, "I am Free". How can I be free from myself? How can I be free from the bondage of myself and then build this strong "and" that connects "you" and "I"? It's like a bridge. This is a secret. When we find this "and", then "I" come alive and "you" come alive. When that "and" is gone, then I cannot exist meaningfully, and you cannot exist meaningfully; we live in separation. We are not an island. We are connected. We are people of relationships, but relationships are so difficult. It's not easy just because you're married, just because you are now boyfriend and girlfriend, just because you're engaged. That doesn't mean the relationship is there. A relationship is something that consciously you have to continuously build, otherwise, the relationship dies.

So whenever I do marriage counselling, I do that in the beginning. The first year is very important for all of you. You try to connect with each other, but if you don't do anything after 10 years, that relationship is not there anymore. And after 10 years down the road, "Gee, what happened?". You're supposed to love me, but there is no such thing as "supposed" to love me. Either you

love or not, there is no such thing. There's no rule that you're supposed to love anyone, so even though you're married, you have to continuously build that "and", then it grows, but if you just leave it aside and don't do anything about it, then after 10 years it's not there anymore. So this "and" is very, very important, but the "and" is very difficult to build. Today I'm going to talk about this "and", and what that "and" looks like.

Building Strong Relationships

To build relationships, it takes a long time to build it and take so much of our energy and patience and love to build a good relationship, but once it is built, the relationship makes all of us very, very strong. Relationships make us strong. Even though everything else fails, if the relationship is there, you can survive, but if even if everything is there if a relationship is not there, then it is pretty difficult to survive. When you look at your booklet, Ecclesiastes 4:12, it says: "And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken." A threefold cord is not quickly broken. If you're connected, you're not going to be easily broken. That relationship is strong.

Martin Buber

There was a Jewish scholar who was born in 1878. He was born more than 100 years ago, but his thinking and his thoughts are still very much relevant to us, so I'm going to use them. I'm not going to describe his theology or anything. He was a Jewish theologian. He wasn't a Christian, rather a Jewish theologian, but his studies, I think are still very relevant after 100 some years. His name is Martin Buber. He was born in Vienna, Austria. When he was three years old, his mother left without any explanation. She just left. After a while, his father took him to his grandparents, Carl Buber took little Martin to a small rural area in Galicia. And for eight decades of his life, he had to endure the heartache of rejection. He grew up under his grandparents, so as soon after the father dropped him off, he was gone too. So he lived without a mother or a father. He lived alone, under his grandparents. Maybe because of his personal situation, he was very interested in relationships. So sometimes I wonder, life difficulties are not necessarily always bad. Sometimes because we human beings are kind of weak, unless we experienced something through our skin, we can never experience or learn. He truly experienced this rejection and loneliness and tremendous, a sense of being alone in the entire universe. So he thought a lot about relationships.

He never blamed anyone for his situation. I think that's maturity. You can blame people and just be done with it, but he never blamed anyone for that. He chose to meditate on, contemplate the relationship. He was Albert Einstein's friend.

"I-It" and "I-thou" Relationships

Albert Einstein explained the world through scientific fiscal understanding, but Martin Buber explained the world through meaningful relationships. Martin Buber explains our relationship in two ways. There are two kinds of relationships and even the title itself when you look at it, you'll figure out what he tries to say: "I - thou" relationship and "I - it" relationship. And "thou" and "it" does not describe the people that you have relationships with. They describe the kind of dash (-) that you have. Depending on the kind of relationship you have, the other person can become "thou" or "it". Sometimes even God can be an "it" rather than a "thou". The parents can be "it" instead of being "thou". When you use God or your parents just for your personal need, then it becomes an "I - it" relationship. But an "I - thou" relationship is very different and I like to talk about the dash (-) that connects between I and you and whether an I and your relationship is either "I - thou" or "I - it"

I want you to think about the kind of relationships that you're building right now. Are they "I-thou" relationship or "I-it" relationships? As I said, even with God you can build "I-It" relationship without knowing that you're building an "I-It" relationship. You think that you're building "I-thou", but ultimately you're just building an "I-It" relationship just for your own salvation, your security, your peace of mind and your blessings. If that is all you think about, then you are building "I-It" relationships. You are just using God for your own self. Then that is an "I-It" relationship. I cannot say that "I-It" relationships are necessarily bad relationships. I don't want to say that. An "I-It" relationship is only the beginning point to be transformed to "I-Thou". An "I-It" relationship is a kind of a cocoon,

If an "I - thou" relationship is a butterfly. An "I-Thou" relationship can fly and this "I-It" is only a cocoon. And this is where I become totally free. As we sang, I am free. In this relationship, I become free. But in this relationship, I am not yet truly free. Ninety percent of the relationships that you have, is the "I-It" relationship. Probably 80-90 percent of relationships are "I-It" relationships. At Dixie and Eglinton, there is a good Afghanistan restaurant, if you want to go try middle-eastern Afghanistan food, it's a kind of fast food

restaurant. When you go there, there are combos, so it is very easy to order. So I order combo 3. I then they gave me a number 58, then I go to my seat and then sit down and wait for my number to be called. And then they call my number and I go there. And then, I show my number 58 and they gave me my number three. So I take my number three and come back and then eat. That's all the relationship between that person means just number. I'm number 58 and I order number three. So that's how are our relationship is like that is "I-It" relationship. It doesn't go beyond that.

When Nelson Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island as a prisoner, his number was 46664, because he was imprisoned in the year '64 and he was the 466th prisoner which makes 46664. Bono wrote a song just to say that this is not just a number. So if you go to YouTube, you will see Bono's song, 46664. While Nelson Mandela was in prison, to the prison guards, he was just number 46664. He was just a number. Nothing beyond that. Their relationship was the "I-It" relationship.

I'm trying to describe this dash. We can see "I-it" relationship in a professional relationship. When a patient goes to see a doctor, the patient is not interested in the illness of the of the doctor. I'm interested in myself. Of course, I'm different, because my doctor is James, so I'm much more interested in his health. So, when I go, "how are you doing, how's your heart condition?" and all that stuff before he asks me anything. But in a regular situation, when you go see a doctor, you're not interested in the doctor's physical conditional, you're interested in your physical condition. You tell them what's wrong with you and all that, and then they tell you and nothing goes beyond that. Just a functional relationship. Because 80 to 90 percent of our relationship is "I-it" relationship, we are used to "I-it" relationships. In "I-it" relationship "it" is dispensable. "It" exists only for my needs. The interest is not in the dash. The interest is in me, that my needs are met, not in the dash, not in the relationship. To fulfill my needs, we use others. There is no deep sharing. We are there together just for our needs. When we are in a lineup while grocery shopping, a cashier sometimes talks to a customer and is like "Yesterday, I went to the party and all that stuff. You know, that drink was so great," and the people in the line, they get frustrated because they get delayed, right? I mean rightly so, but the unspoken rule is don't go beyond "I-it" relationship. Here, just do "I-it" relationship and that's it. That is "I-it" relationship. All the self-centred relationship ends up with "I-it" relationship.

"I-It" in Friendships

Even our friendship can become "I-it" relationship. I'm lonely, so I need you. I need my playmate, so I can do something together. So, friends are just there to fulfill my loneliness and that's a friendship, but that's an "I-it" friendship. I believe that friendship is more than that, more than just using each other for my own loneliness. In a marriage, your spouse is more than just to fulfill my social needs. Then we need to go beyond an "I-it" relationship to the "I-thou" relationship. But a lot of friendships remains at "I-it" relationships. And Jesus said, I'm your friend and a good friend is you die for your friend. That is a real friendship. That is the "I-thou" relationship, not "I-it" relationship. We are so used to. We are so used to this kind of relationship. So, we think that all the relationships are "I-it" relationship, but you are wrong. With that kind of thinking, we will never experience the beauty that relationship can bring to us. With "I-it" relationship, I can never be transformed. I use "it", but I can never be transformed. 80 to 90 percent of our relationship is "I-it" relationship, but what transforms "I" is an "I-thou" relationship, which is only 10 to 20 percent of your relationship. The love and sacrifice of our parents are similar to an "I-thou" relationship. They don't think about themselves, they only think about the other. So that is more like an "I-thou" relationship.

The Story of the Praying Hands

Have you seen the praying hands, the picture? The beautiful praying hands. There's a beautiful story behind that picture. These two friends were artists and they were preparing themselves to be artists, but they didn't have enough money so that they said, they were talking to each other. "You study first, I'll help you", "No, you study first, I'll help you". And finally, they made an arrangement. So, the other guy, studied first, went to university and studied art and the other friend, because he didn't have money, he went to a construction site and he was carrying bricks and all that. So, he was helping. But because he worked such rough labour, his hands got all calloused and everything, so he cannot draw anymore, and so he became kind-of bitter. The other guy became very famous and kind of forgot about his friend. And one day he came to visit his friend and saw his friend pray and so the praying hands and it was so beautiful, with that imagination, he came back home he drew that picture. That is the "I-thou" friendship.

With "I-it" alone we don't experience the transformation. I want to express "I-it" relationship in a different way. I can say "I-other" relationship. "I-it" relationship is the same as "I-other" relationship. When you become, not "thou", but "other", we cannot have meaningful relationships. The "other" has nothing to do with me. The other is there outside of me with no involvement with me. There's a good Korean word for "other". You know what that is? 남 (nam). We call it 남. It's a very good Korean word. We don't call our family 남. We don't call our friends 남. We don't call our parents 남. 남, others, are strangers. Not one of us. Not within my circle. Outside of my circle.

"I" Plus "You"

"I" plus "you" equals we. "I" plus "other" equals what? Still "I". What we are trying to build this is I plus you, we. Not I plus other, which is just I. When you hate somebody, you must make the person other, because you can never hate thou. You must make that person first, other, then you can hate the person. When thou become the other or it, it is much easier to do whatever I want. When you make other, racially, other, sexually, other, politically, other, ethnically, other, morally, other, religiously, other, personally, other, you have a good excuse not to have a relationship with them. I don't want to pinpoint one person, but Mena has been with us for a few months in our church. And she even came to the retreat. She's an Italian Canadian and she was raised practicing Catholic. Now she is a Protestant, in a majority of Koreans. I think it takes tremendous courage to be with people who are "other" on the surface, but when you're connected that "other" can become "thou". "Other" can become "you".

Last year I went to Israel. Israel is a strange place. It is religiously charged. Religion is in the air. Religious feelings are in the air. When you go there, from early in the morning, the first day, around 4 or 5, I heard "hmmm" (humming noise). What is this? I don't even know how many minutes that lasted. And then around noon, "hmmmmm". In the evening, "hmmmmmm". At first, it was so strange. It stressed me out but I after a while I was waiting for "hmmmmm". Why isn't it coming out? It's 12:00? Come on! You're late today! You feel comfortable hearing it. It religiously charged, spiritually charged. Even the airplane to Israel was religiously charged. I took a lot of airplane trips, and we don't talk about religion, we don't talk about deep sharing, but when I went to Israel, there was a Holocaust survivor, she was sharing her own experiences. And there was a missionary from South America, and he tried to convert her. And then in the back, there was a

messianic Jew and they were talking, but I mean the whole airplane is charged with meaningfulness, meaningful conversation. And the person right beside me, she was a Jew, but she was a retired teacher. Her husband was a doctor and he was retired too. They live in Vancouver, and they were on the way to Israel. Every year, she goes back to Israel. We were talking. In the beginning, we were just chit-chatting, but then we started talking about the issue of Palestine and the Jews, and then she was sharing about how she felt after retirement and you know, her kids. And two or three hours just passed by without us realizing it. We are so absorbed in our conversation that we didn't know that two or three hours passed by. I didn't need to use her. She didn't need to use me. That is an "I-thou" relationship. That is an "I-thou" relationship. We are beyond "I-it" relationship. You don't have to be family or even a long time friend to have "I-thou" relationship.

Relationships and Blessings

An "I-thou" relationship does not have to be a long-lasting relationship. You don't demand that it should be a long-lasting relationship. It can be there briefly and disappear. It's not something within your control. You don't control "I-thou" relationships. It is not something that I can dictate. No, you and I, from today, after this lecture, we will have "I-thou" relationship. No, you cannot because "I-thou" relationship is not something that you can dictate. When it happens, it is a blessing, but when you try to possess it, it disappears. When you're obsessed to have it, it goes away further from you. But when you quietly wait, it comes. Rabbi Pinhas said this, "what you pursue, you don't get, but what you allow to grow slowly in his own way, comes to you.". So, "I-thou" relationship is not something that you make.

Do you remember the story of manna? When the Israelites did not have food, every day God gave them manna, but they could not store and it went bad after the day. It is just like a blessing. "I-thou" relationships are like that. It is given to you, but you cannot possess it and hold it. You don't control it's coming and it's going. It can come silently and go silently. When it comes, don't try to possess it, when it goes, don't be too sad. It can be 10 minutes, it can be 10 hours, it can be 10 years. It has nothing to do with the length of time. It is the quality of the relationship, not the length of the relationship. But the thing is, even if it is 10 minutes, its impact and effect can last a lifetime. That "I-thou" relationship, even though it lasts only for 10 minutes, it can impact for your lifetime.

Jesus and "I-Thou" Relationships

People who met Jesus Christ experienced this "I-thou" relationship and that short moment impacted them for their whole entire life. Do you remember Nicodemus? He came to Jesus. He wanted to talk to him and Jesus says, as soon as he saw him, you have to be born again, he said, and he talked about spirit probably 10 minutes, 15 minutes at the most, but that had a profound impact on Nicodemus. When you read the scripture, Nicodemus comes out only in John. He comes out three times in John. In the beginning and he disappears and when Jesus was in Sanhedrin and they wanted to kill him, and he stood up and said, "do we kill somebody without properly going through the procedure?". I mean, it was very courageous for him to do that. Everybody wanted to kill him, and he stood up and spoke up for Jesus. And at the end, after Jesus died, he was the one who took Jesus' body down and gave a proper burial. And even though he had 10 minutes of experience that had a profound influence on him.

There was a person like that to me. I still remember that encounter. When I went to Brazil many years ago, I went there and met this old man. He was shorter than me. He looked up to me like this. I felt great. For a long time, I always had to look up, but not this time. I mean, from the first moment that I met him, he would give me his total attention to me. So, we were talking, and he was saying he was a priest once, but he quit his priesthood and then one day at home, he heard this baby crying outside. So, he went outside and there was a baby. Somebody dropped the baby. So, he took the baby and then after a few weeks another baby was dropped. He did for a few times and then he became kind of famous in the village. "Oh, if you have unwanted babies, drop them there, he will take good care of them.". So, people kept dropping the babies. He did not want to do the orphanage, but by the time I went there, he was running an orphanage without it being his intention. And he was saying all that and he was such a nice guy. And at the end of our conversations, he just hugged me really hard and said, "See you in heaven." That moment. I couldn't hold back my tears, you know? I probably met him for about 25 minutes and he held me, and said, "See you in heaven." By now probably he's in heaven and I know that I will see him in heaven. That brief encounter, that feeling, is still with me. The words he said, "see you in heaven, is very fresh even though it was from 30 some years ago. That "I-thou" experience can transform me and can transform others. It is a beautiful relationship. When there is a relationship of "I-thou", you experience oneness, and you see nothing but that person. Everything retreats into the background

and only that person is there. Do experience that? That total attention when you are in conversation, that total absorption.

Relationships based on Self-Focus

Rabbi Chaim, he saw this tightrope walker and he said this, "this man is risking his life and I cannot say why, but I am quite sure that while he's walking the rope, he's not thinking of the fact that he's earning money by what is doing for if he did, he would fall." Total focus and concentration. In the "I-thou" relationship, you experience this kind of focus and concentration. Thou becomes the whole universe. I come alive and thou comes alive. You know people who do extreme sports? Bicycle or ski or extreme sports, you ask them, why do you do it? Why do you risk your life? And you know what they say? I feel alive by doing that. You don't have to do extreme sports to feel alive. When you experienced the "I-thou" relationship, you feel alive. In our relationships, we don't know how to focus and how to concentrate because we are so scared. We are so filled with our own personal agenda. Our minds are scattered, and our relationships become scattered. We are too self-focused. My continuous struggle for myself and for helping other people is that. How can you be free from this? How can you be free from this? When you are free from this, you will experience true freedom. You come alive! But when you're obsessed with this, then slowly you'll die.

We let down our agenda, our demands, our expectations, and we open our hearts to each other. Then "I-thou" will come. I may not be able to create "I-thou", but I can block "I-thou" from coming by my attitude. If "I" is filled with prejudice, obsession, expectation, "I-thou" relationship is not possible. If "I" is too strong and too big, the relationship is not possible. That's why Jesus said to follow me, to make fish yourself. What do you have to do first? You must deny yourself. That means you must make yourself small. Otherwise, you can never build a meaningful relationship. When I become bigger, the dash (-) becomes smaller, then I become smaller, the dash becomes bigger. The modern world is obsessed with building bigger "I"s. When you build big I, dash becomes smaller.

This illusionary "I" destroys the relationship. When "I" is transformed, "it" is transformed into "thou" and "and" comes alive. No more separation, no more division, just oneness. In the "I-thou" relationship, there is no dominant "other". Whoever has the most stable foothold supports the climb that day. There is no dominant one. So, as Saint Paul said, "when you experienced

Jesus Christ and build that "I-thou" relationship with Jesus Christ, this what happens, there is no longer Jew or Greek. There is no longer a slave or free. There is no longer male and female for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. We all become connected."

Let me give you the last prayer of Jesus Christ for the human beings. He said this. John 17: "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,[f] so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." Look at that. It is filled with oneness. This is Jesus' last prayer. Jesus is talking about the beautiful "I-thou" relationship.

Don't expect the "I-thou" relationship to always be there. You'll get frustrated and disappointed. It's not realistic. "I-thou" becomes, "I-it" and we experience another "I-thou". All these things, "I-it" and "I-thou", flow like a tide. It comes and goes. Our relationship goes up and down. If there is a flat line, you're dead. There always ups and downs. I mean relationship goes up and down. "I-thou" becomes an "I-it", but then "I-it" changes into "I-thou." So, don't expect it to be always there. That's not realistic, but the important thing is every moment we need to be awake and be aware of what kind of quality your relationships are right now. You need to be aware of what kind of relationship am I building. Even with the spouse. After a while, you just demand and demand and demand and everything turns into an "I-it" relationship. Instead of building an "I-thou" relationship. We all have our weaknesses, and because of these weaknesses, we hurt others and we get hurt. We close our heart. When we get hurt, the first thing you do is you close your heart to other people and a true relationship cannot be built.

Finding Power in Weakness

Do you know what Thomas Merton said? "Prayer and love are learned in the hour when prayer has become impossible and your heart has turned to stone." There are times when our hearts have turned to stone. That's when we truly love. We truly learn love. Our weaknesses sometimes can poison our relationship, but in Tibet, there is a saying: "The medicine can be found in the poison." When our weaknesses poison our relationship and when our relationship is in an ill condition, maybe that's when we can find the true cure

for our relationship. Yes, we see a lot of people with a lot of weaknesses, but behind all those weaknesses, I hope that you can also find treasures, some beautiful qualities behind them.

You know, I'm reminded of a scene, Jean Valjean, that movie. What is that? Les Misérables. Yeah. A beautiful movie. And when Jean Valjean was arrested, the bishop said to him, "Oh, you left in such a hurry, you forgot to take the candlestick that I gave to you and here, take it." Even though the bishop knew that Jean Valjean did something bad, he didn't just look at the ugly side of it, but he saw the potential beauty behind it. And we see Jean Valjean live the potential beauty at the end. That's what we need to see. As we look at each other, yes, we see each other's weaknesses, but I hope that we can also see the beauty that is hidden behind those weaknesses. When you don't see beauty in other people, you cannot build the "I-thou" relationship. When you see ugliness in other people, you have no choice but to build an "I-it" relationship. But when you start discovering the beauty in other people, then you can build "I-thou" relationships. Have a big heart like an ocean. The ocean is at the bottom, but it embraces all the waters from small rivers and big rivers. So, it is good to be like the ocean so that you can embrace their weaknesses, but the ocean is bigger than the rivers. I believe that love is bigger than hatred. Love can embrace the hatred, but hatred cannot embrace love.

Love and Humility

When Jesus said, "love your enemies," Jesus is talking about the magnitude, the size of the love that is bigger than the hatred. The cloud cannot embrace the Sky. Sky embraces the cloud. Love is like that. As the ocean embraces the rivers, as the sky embraces the cloud, the true humility can embrace other weaknesses, and I believe that true humility is courage. So, if I may say the last word, when you make "I" so big then "you" becomes so small. But when you make "I" small, "and" becomes bigger, and through that you both become alive. So, two kinds of dashes, two kinds of relationship. Think about it. What are the relationships that you're pursuing in your own relationships, in your own life? With your parents, with a church, with God, with others? Are you building a relationship just to be meet my needs, or do you build relationships so that you can give? Think about it.

You and I: Part 3

[Link to the Audio](#)

Relationships that Bring Change

So the last lecture, as I said, this is going to be short and then I want you to discuss more how we can build more meaningful relationships in our lives. And when we are able to build a meaningful relationship in our lives, then we are truly free. You don't need to be so obsessed about ourselves and then we can bring about real change in us, in others and in the society they will live in and that's where true transformation happens. Jesus Christ came not in a vacuum and Jesus Christ does not bring about transformation, not individually alone. Jesus brings about transformation in a relationship through a relationship. That's why Jesus Christ called the disciples and made relationships with them for three years so that they can go out and build a new kind of relationship with others. It is very different from the old power related relationship. This new relationship is a love-related relationship and Jesus taught them what, how to have that relationship so that they can.

They may go out and build relationships with others. It's not. We don't need that many people to bring about transformation. The world is not changed by the majority. The world is not transformed by the great multitude. When you look at the change of the world, that world was transformed by a few people by small, committed people, and they made a transformation in the world. You know the very famous our anthropologist Margaret Mead and Margaret Mead said this: never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has. I think she saw it right, not the multitude, not the majority changed the world, few dedicated. Few dedicated people change the world. And that's it only then they change the world. That's why Jesus said, walk the narrow path. Jesus Christ came alone and he had only 12 disciples to bring about change.

So God came, Jesus Christ came to teach us that new kind of relationship and we want to learn this new kind of relationship so that we can relate to other people in a new way. Now, in the way, everybody relates to each other, not in the way the world of relates to each other that we want to build. What is the quality of the relationship that I want to relate to people, with and everything begins with our relationship with God? When we can build a true

I thou relationship not religious relationship. I'm not talking about religion, I don't want you to be religious alone. That itself will not change anything. Jesus Christ was also a victim of that religion at that time, so being religious is not really the only answer, but I want you to have genuine, real I thou relationship with God and then you can be a healing presence for other people, not only for yourself but to other people through quality relationship.

Relationships that Bring Healing

My life can bring healing to other people. we saw a few examples already that I mentioned about the person that I counselled with, and then a few through that relationship they truly brought about the transformation. As you see there are, there are a destructive relationship and healing relationship and we want to build healing, relationship, not a destructive relationship. Then I thou relationship is necessary. Then I like to see examine some of it and Chung moksanim had a book. Actually, I and Thou by Martin Buber, but, you read this for a long time ago and then, and, this is a book, but probably if you read it, it will be quite different from what I'm saying because is pretty difficult to read. First of all, when you read it, you'll get confused a second. Second of all, I just use a title, borrowed his title, so I'm not really summarizing his book, but, that will give you a lot of, ideas about either our relationship and I thou relationship is the only relationship that can bring about transformation.

I-if relationship. Doesn't matter how long you build a relationship with another person that I-if relationship will not bring about transformation. When we are able to truly seek others. I said three things, in a relationship. Either you manipulate others or you become manipulated, or third, you can truly seek others and either relationship is truly sick. Other people, you know, love is funny and strange. Love is by nature giving yourself to others. But as a result, the person who gives love receives tremendous healing as they give love, you practice it when you give love to somebody. Then as a result, strangely, you experienced tremendous healing in your own self. Henry Nowan, he's a, he was a professor at Harvard University. He was a well-known professor and he was respected. His life was going well, but he wasn't happy. So he quit his university position. He came to large community daybreak community here in Richmond Hill area.

So he helped, mentally and physically challenged people. They, they cannot even get up by themselves. So he has to go and then wakes them up and

takes him to the wheelchair and it carries them. And, he, he did that every day and he did conversation. And this person has no idea about Harvard. If he says, okay, I'm from Harvard University, he will know what Harvard is. So I mean, he had to relate to this person, not as a Harvard professor, not as somebody who achieves so much, but as just as a human being. And he related out and he gave a lot of love to this person. And at the end he said, I was changed. I experienced my own healing by taking care of this person. So love is strange when you give, actually, you receive healing in your own life. So when you are able to give love to the people around you, ultimately you receive that love, as a result by giving love, we experience our vision, not when I, oh, I want to be safe.

Not when I say that, but when you truly give love, you experience salvation. And Salvation is the restoration of relationship, relationship with God and relationship with each other. That's what salvation is. When there is a relationship problem between when there was a relationship problem between Adam and Eve. This is what Adam said. before What did he say first? He saw him. What did he say? You are bone of my bones. The flesh of my flesh. Wow. So beautiful. Hey, you and I are so connected. We are almost one together. But after they had a fight, this is what Adam said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate very differently. She's not bone on bone or flesh of flesh. The woman you gave to me, you know, he's blaming God. He's blaming the woman at, at the same time.

When we Can Not Show Our Self

It's very different. There is no bone of my bones. Only the woman whom you gave to be with me. She's not thou anymore. She has become it or other and he blames her and also blamed God. But when you look at it, before this happened, already broken relationship happened, with God. When this, before he said this, he said about God this way. I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid. He was always naked, but all of a sudden he was embarrassed about his nakedness. I think the Genesis writer, knew human psychology very well.

When a relationship is broken, we are afraid of our own nakedness. We cannot be ourselves in true I thou relationship. You can be yourself as weak as you are. You are free to be yourself, but when that I thou relationship is broken, you are not any more free to be yourself. Pretension takes over. You

have to show the good side of yourself and you're embarrassed about your nakedness, your darkness, your weaknesses, but when I thou relationship is truly formed, then all this pretension disappear and then you become totally free to be yourself. I thou relationship gives freedom to be who we are, not scared of our faults and shortcomings, so when you come to God, when you have me thou relationship, you can truly be naked to God, but if your relationship with God is not I-Thou relationship, you'll be scared of God. You will not come to God with a naked self.

You have to somehow show your good side of it and already that relationship is a broken relationship, but with God, there's no other relationship but I thou relationship with human beings. We can have other relationships, but with God the only relationship that is possible is I thou relationship where you're completely free to be yourself, to show your shortcomings. So yesterday we saw today or yesterday, I'm not sure, but, we saw that Paul, after meeting Christ, he was able to show his naked self instead of saying that, oh I used to be bad, but I am good now. But now he could truly show his weaknesses, his darkness and his shortcomings. Being free to be who you are instead of running away is healing. That Samaritan woman we explored, she tried to run away, run away from people. She shot herself from the rest of the people and she was in her own closet.

Jesus went there and brought her out and brought about the transformation and she was free. Now she was free to dance. She was free to run, she was free to fly and she ran to the community. And then told them that this Jesus changed me and transformed me. That's what I thou relationship does to people. Freedom from their bondage. Empower them to go beyond their weaknesses. Give them the courage to accept who they are, no matter how painful that may be open their hearts to be connected with others. We are all in sense victims of expectations, judgment and condemnation of the world. John Welwood said in his book, "Perfect love, imperfect relationships", he said: expectations in relationships, can often be a subtle form of violence, for they can be a demand that others conform to our will, so sometimes expectations are poison because it can be a subtle form of violence in the relationship.

Good I, Bad Other

Many times through our relationships, instead of feeling liberated and empowered, we feel trapped, chained and belittled, and then you cannot

demand the other person to continue that relationship. When you feel belittled, when you feel chained, when you feel trapped, you have to deal with that relationship first before just asking that person to continue that relationship. Sometimes we are way too judgmental of each other. The less you demand total fulfillment from the relationship, the more you can appreciate them. For the beautiful tapestries, they are in which absolute and relative perfect and imperfect, infinite and finite are marvellously interwoven. You can experience that tapestry. Within us. We all have this thing. Good. I versus bad other that mentality kills the relationship. There is a word between good I and bad other and actually bad other is an internal image of the person who doesn't love us. Whoever does not love us. We label them sometimes as bad other our relationship. Instead of loving, of lifting relationship, they have become a competition of who is right and who is more righteous. When you make the other bad, you cannot have genuine relationships. As I said, if you don't find beauty in other people, you cannot have I thou relationship. When you make another person as bad, then you cannot build a genuine real relationship. So we need to, think about this. Good. I and bad. Other.

Think about yourself whether you have this good I, bad another attitude in you. I'm always good. I'm always right. Always the other person is bad and always the other person is wrong. Think about whether you have this good I, bad other mentality within you because that mentality is very opposite of biblical teaching. You may think that this is right, but this is self-righteousness without realizing you have fallen into your own self Righteousness. I'm always right and others are always wrong and, you're busy proving that others are wrong and you're right. Even by destroying the relationship, you try to prove that others are wrong, but the relationship is broken but doesn't matter. I am right. They are wrong. That's what matter that good I, bad other mentality kills and destroys the relationship. Let me give you biblical example whether this is biblical mentality or not. It is the opposite of what the Bible says. Let me give you a little example for you first, "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others better than yourselves."

Is it this teaching? Good I, bad other? No, Paul teaches: consider others better than yourself. Let me give you another example. This time, this time it's Jesus' teaching: "do not judge so that you may not be judged for with the judgement you make, you will be judged and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? You see Spec in another side, but you don't see. Log in your own eyes it's not good I, bad another teaching I have

a law. Jesus said, others have only a Spec, maybe good other bad I, and it is a very different from this teaching and typical example of the opposite of this teaching is Jesus teaching about Pharisee's prayer. Let me read it, and then you listen two men went up to the temple to pray one a Pharisee and the other, a tax collector.

The Pharisee standing by himself was praying to us. "God, I thank you that I am not like other people". What is he doing? Good, I bad other, thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a 10th of all my income. Good I, bad other, but at the end, you know what Jesus said. Do you know who went home? Considered righteous by God. Not pharisee, but tax collector. He was proven wrong. St. Paul had this good I, bad another attitude when before he met God in an I thou relationship, he went out to persecute Christians and then he said this to himself. He said, listen, if anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more circumcised. On the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews, as to the law of Pharisee, as the zeal a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Good, he was full of good I and he went out to capture the bad other. That's when he met the risen Christ, and then everything collapsed. Everything he believed collapse. This is what he said after meeting Christ Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

This is after he met Christ. No more good I bad Other mentality in Paul, in a relationship this good I bad other mentality is always in the way. As long as we have this mentality, the relationship cannot last long or get deepened. When people do that, first you fight, but there are so strong because they want to prove that I am right and you're wrong until even though relationships are broken, so then after a while you don't even try. When that person says, I am. Right, okay, you're right, but is there a relationship you just move on? But the relationship is not deepened. Other people just avoid. It's not that they agree with you. They avoid any conflict. So this good. I bet another relationship is always in the way. John Welwood said, the most destructive element in human relationships is the urge to make other people bad or wrong, and then judge reject or punish them for that. When you fail to grieve your own hurt, you create grievance within you. And I'm going to just talk about five A's for you and then I want you to let you go and then discuss, there are five a's in his book. How to be an adult in relationships. First is attention.

Pay Attention

Attention is when I, thou relationship occurs. Everything else goes into the background. The person you're talking to becomes the entire universe. It shows how interested you are in that person while listening to someone. If you're thinking about something else, you're not giving attention. So when you build want to build, build a good relationship, learn to give attention in the fellowship hall or whatever. When you hear somebody then don't get distracted. You pay total attention to that person. As I said about them, the men that I met in Brazil, when he listened to me, he looked at me as though I am the entire universe and he was very interested in what I have to say. But lot of times when we hear other people, well, what do we do? We are thinking of something else, you know? Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Really? Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

You know, you're not sure what you heard, you know, you just want to pretend that you heard, but give total attention is difficult because we are scattered we are distracted. There's a book that, I was reading by Carr Nicholas and that title is: the shallows what the Internet is doing to our brains. I mean, this, Internet, age is very difficult to have real a real attention and concentration. He, this is what he said and what the net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words, now I zip along the surface like a guy on a jet ski so he cannot really enter into the ocean of words and enter into the ocean of thoughts, enter into the ocean of the other people. We're just zipping along just this person and that person and we cannot really have concentration and this will affect our relationship.

How do we communicate? A lot of times with text message, you know, very short, especially with the iPhone is really, really hard to write anything. So I just. Okay. Yes, just, just one or two words, right? That's how we communicate. And with that how can you talk about your feelings? How can you talk about your deep thoughts, your struggles and, we are so used to this kind of form of communication. And also, a lot of times we are filled with our own agenda. When you listen to people, paying attention means you're not judging that person, but as soon as you hear one word already make a judgment and, you don't listen. Really, you're listening to your own voice, you know, they are talking, but you're creating your own novel, you know, by listening to their stories, you're making up your own stories because of the, you're not paying you're filled with your own agenda.

So when you listen to other people, pay attention, truly listen. Anthony Demello said a lot of people see persons and things not as they are, but as you are, we see things not as they are, but as we are let down all our prejudgments and pay attention to what they say. Second, acceptance. You don't have to agree with everyone. The fact that we don't agree with them can make us very uncomfortable, but we have to accept the fact that people are different. People are different. And when, and we have to learn to accept people who are different from us. We don't have to always change them to be like us. So that we may relate to them. Accepting, accepting somebody means to respect their choices, their feelings, and their personal traits. When a woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus and Jesus said, let those who have no sin cast the first stone, Jesus accepted the sinners and outcasts without moralizing them accepting somebody is opposite of moralizing them.

You don't have to agree with their lifestyle. You don't have to agree with their philosophy, you don't have to agree with what they say, but we have to learn to accept them as they are. We need to be a bigger person to accept those who are different. We try to earn love through our efforts, looks talents and achievements. By doing that, we may earn approval, but what we need is love that. Accept us as we are. We want to be where we are accepted and then we should practice this acceptance instead of trying to make changes so fast. By doing that, you don't change anybody. Third, appreciation. Appreciation is finding good values in each person. Everyone has a beautiful, good quality and we discover that good quality, that's talent. When you discover others faults, you're not genius because everybody knows how to do it, but when you find a good value that other people don't find, then you're genius, you can find treasure in every person. That woman who's was 20 years older than, than the person that I mentioned in the first night, that woman found treasure in him and then he, she was able to help him and transformed him. John M Gutman a professor at the University of Washington in Seattle. He said, the ratio of appreciation to the complaint in couples that stay together. You know what? That is? Five to one.

People who stayed together. They give appreciation five times more than the complaints. So in your all those married couples, learn to show appreciation. Learn to express appreciation when you are thankful, don't just be thankful inside. Say it, express it. Thank you. And then by doing that, you build a better relationship. When we are appreciated, we know it, we feel valued. I know when I'm appreciated, I feel good. I feel empowered, I feel precious

and I can move on in spite of the fact that I have shortcomings, I can move on through that appreciation and I'm going to move to the next.. in building I, thou relationship. Finding others. Precious quality is very important and of course you have to be very sincere about your appreciation for people like me. If you say, oh, you're so tall and handsome, then that person is half right.

I mean, so when you show appreciation, you have to be genuine and sincere. You cannot make up then that's not appreciated. That's a ridiculing. Somebody next, affection. Love is our primary need. Relationship. Grows on love. Like a tree cannot grow without water. Relationships cannot grow without love. Love is a warm feeling, but it is not just warm. Feeling. Love is the way you respond to different situations. Let me tell you when love meets suffering and pain, love is expressed as compassion, but when love needs enemies, it is expressed as forgiveness. When love meets, the evil, the love is expressed as justice, to people who are kind to us. Love shows appreciation to people who want to stay away from us because they are angry. Love waits, to people who misunderstand us, love explains to them and helps them understand to people who cannot stand us.

Relationship not in our Control

Love embraces them as the ocean. Embrace the water. Rivers, bring down, and as the sky embraces the cloud to people who need us, love stays with them and be with them. So love has many different faces. Love is the way you respond to different situations and expresses itself in different ways. So love is not just always warm, fuzzy feeling sometimes because of love. You speak the truth sometimes because of love you are firm sometimes because of love. You critique. So love expresses itself in many different ways. The last, an allowing. So first let's go over. First one is what? Attention, second acceptance, third appreciation and fourth affection. Try to remember this. And then in your relationship, try to, be aware of these five, five a's. The last one is most difficult. That is allowing, but that is most important. We allow people who they are, we let people express their pain, their hurt, their deep needs, and even their deep insecurities. We allow them to do so because that's what our Lord Jesus did. He allowed Peter to deny him.

The cross is the ultimate expression of allowing. When you read the last part, the last supper in John, Jesus said this, Jesus knew exactly who was going to betray him. Judas. He said, one of you will betray me, and then he gave everyone the element and then he said this, do it to Judas. Do quickly what

you're going to do. He allowed Judas to be trained and to the end, he gave the bread and wine. This allowing is very painful and very difficult, but Jesus did it. Jesus did not say, Judas Why are you trying to do that? Don't do it. Jesus knew that that won't be helpful. Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray him, so he allowed Judas to betray him. I thou relationship gives, total freedom to the other. A true relationship is possible only in this total freedom. A true relationship is not in our control. So these five A's. I'm going to stop here tonight and I want you to go to your group and share it together. And you come back and then because it's last night, I don't know. How much time do we have? Yeah. Including group discussion. How much time. Oh, what time are they supposed to finish their group discussion? Nine o'clock. Really? Yeah. Can you come back at 10 tonight? I said sure. Okay. Nine o'clock. Okay. So can you come back at 9:00 and share a little bit of what you discussed and I liked to hear all the groups sharing that. What is the best way? Attitude or behaviour to build good either relationship.



Change

Rev. In Kee Kim

Change Part 1

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

Our topic this weekend is change. Change is very important in our lives. It's the very, very core of the life that we're living. Depending on what kind of change you make, your life will be very, very different. If I didn't change to become a minister, my life would have been very different. If I didn't change to come to Canada, my life would have been very different. So depending on what kind of changes you make in your lives, your life will turn out very differently depending on which university you go to, or depending on what you try to major in, or where to live, or what to do with your lives. So all these changes, little changes, make tremendous impact on your life and so it is a very important topic... but how mindlessly and carelessly we make changes. Just for a moment, we just change and then you regret and you change back.

And so a lot of times we make these changes without really thinking about it, even though it is very, very important that we think very carefully when we make changes, and a lot of people don't make changes like that. Just by the emotion, by the feeling, by the circumstances or by having to make changes - they make changes like that - but I don't think that is a healthy way of making changes in our lives. So this weekend we're going to talk then about how do we change and what is involved in making changes. So the first night tonight I'm going to mainly focus on the attitude towards change and tomorrow morning for the second lecture, I'm going to talk about the dynamics of change or what is going on in the change itself, and the third lecture I'm going to talk about what do we need to do in making changes.

So maybe attitude and change itself and action... and the three topics are: the first one is change happens from the deep desire, and the second one is change happens in the wilderness, and third one is change happens from the mustard seed. Those are the three topics that I'm going to talk about. This is our fourth lecture on happiness. First lecture we talked about happiness itself. How do people become happy? And then we talked about St. Paul a lot and then in Philippians he was in prison, he was waiting for death and he was going through all difficult times, but he said, "Rejoice. And

I'll say it again. Rejoice." Where did he get that joy? Where did he get that happiness?

How Do I Find Happiness?

Where did he get that happiness? And this is what we studied; that happiness does not come from circumstances, we realized. And then the study showed that 50 percent of your happiness you're born with it and then 10 percent your circumstances give you, and 40 percent is your attitude. So some people are born with like a 48 other people born with 47, 46, 45, whatever. You're born with it, you can't change it. Some people are happier than others. Just a little bit of a difference. Some people, 9-10 percent difference of happiness or 8-7 percent. So the degrees are small but depending on your attitude you have 40 percent to work with. So even if you are on the lower scale in your genetics, you still have 40 percent to work with so anybody can be happy... but how does a person become happy? It is to do with the whole series of your belief system which produces your thought, your thought produces your feelings, your feeling produces your action, your action produces your habit, and your habit produces lifestyle. So it all begins with your belief system, what belief system you have inside of you that determines how happy you become and your lifestyle.

And a belief system Paul had was this. This was Paul's belief system: "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." It doesn't matter what happens, but Jesus will bring it to completion. He had that belief system and that belief system controlled his thought. His thought controlled his feeling, his feeling controlled his action, his action controlled his habit, his habit controlled his lifestyle. That's how he could say, "Rejoice and rejoice again." So that was the first lecture that we discussed, and the second lecture we said that, you are happy with your life, not just because you have lot of things, you are happy with your life because life is meaningful. Meaningfulness is very important. And then where do we find the meaning?

We write our own stories.

In a way, we all create stories through your life. You are writing stories. Your life is like story. You hear the story of Abraham, you hear the story of Joseph, you hear the story of Jacob, their stories are all different, but their life created those stories. Each person is creating a story. What kind of story are you

going to write in your life? In other words, you're all novelists. You're writing a novel, a good novel with your life, and what kind of novel are you going to write? Just a flat novel or a very exciting life are you going to make? Every story has meaning. Life has a meaning. Think about what kind of story you want to make with your life. When you look at the Bible, it is all about stories, different people's life stories. And when we look at it very carefully, there's one theme that is going on, that is from bondage to freedom.

That is the story of the Bible. Every person, even though their lives are all different - one common thread, one common theme was from bondage to freedom. That is a kind of life story. So life has a meaning because it makes up stories in your lives. And in the third lecture we talked about your happiness comes from not money, not success, not career, not comfort. Your happiness comes from your relationship with other people. And in relationships there are two kinds of relationship. I-thou relationship and I-it relationship. I-it relationship is when you go to a restaurant and order food. The person who's serving you and yourself, that is I-it relationship. I pay for the money and they give me the food. So that is I-it relationship. I-it relationship, 90 percent of our relationship is I-it relationship, professional relationship is I-it relationship, but only 10 percent is an I-thou relationship.

I-thou relationship is more than "I give you this money, you do something for me." It's not that kind of relationship. An I-thou relationship is essentially Jesus sacrificing himself for us. That is a real love relationship. You sacrifice yourself for the other person because you love them. There's a deep interconnectedness between you and them. You are deeply sharing with each other, that is an I-thou relationship. This relationship only happens for 10 percent of your life, but it governs your happiness. The more I-thou relationships you have, the happier you'll become. The more I-it relationship you have, the less happier you will become. So these relationships determines what kind of happiness and what kind of life you're going to live with your children. What is your relationship? Is it an I-it relationship or an I-thou relationship with your spouse or with your friends or among your Christian brothers and sisters?

Do we create I-it relationships or I-thou relationships? Do we have to think about it and if so, are we trying to build I-thou relationship in every relationship that we have? Even in an I-it relationship, we try our best to build some kind of I-thou relationship from that. Say you're talking with a customer, you ask, "How are you? You look kind of down today?" This type of gesture

is what is helping us create an I-thou relationship in our life. At this retreat, I want to examine the different aspects of change.

To be truly happy, there has to be meaningful change. I believe that Jesus Christ came to us and made us happy by bringing meaningful changes in people's lives. That's what Jesus did. Every person he met, he brought changes. That's what Jesus did. Every person who met Jesus Christ, there was nobody who was not changed. They somehow was affected by Jesus and they somehow got changed and they became happy - not necessarily that they became more successful, not necessarily they became more comfortable or they made more money.

For example, St. Paul before Jesus, he was much, much more comfortable. He had more money then, but after meeting Jesus Christ, he was kicked out from his home and he got persecuted. Their life circumstances did not become better necessarily, but they became happier. So whoever met Jesus Christ, they somehow experienced some kind of change, profound change in them, and Jesus Christ came to make us happy by bringing changes in us. So that's what we're going to discuss together.

Change in the Bible

First of all, let us talk about the Samaritan woman first. The Samaritan woman, what changes did she experience?

She didn't want to meet anybody. That's why she came out at noon to draw water, to make sure that nobody was there. In other words, she did not want to associate with anybody, but she met Jesus at the well. After that encounter, she threw away her water jar and went back to town and started talking to other people, she communicated with people. Meeting Jesus changed her life completely.

How about Zacchaeus? Who was Zacchaeus?

That's right. He was tax collector at that time, although he was not just a tax collector. During those times, they were comparable to thieves and crooks. They were considered crooked people because they are the ones who could exploit their own people. If they can collect more taxes, they in turn get to have more. Due to this, they were despised by other people but Jesus called unto him and singled him out. And Zacchaeus was so impressed by Jesus that he gave up everything. Before his meeting with Jesus, money was

everything to him. Money was his god. After meeting Jesus Christ, he was able to give up his god. This kind of change happened in Zacchaeus.

How about Simon (Peter)?

Before, Simon (Peter) thought that he could do it with his own will, with his own strength, but yet he denied Jesus three times after Jesus Christ came and said, "Do love me?" What he really meant was, you can only follow me when you truly love me. He realized that about the power of Jesus' love and that changed him completely. He was forgiven. He was given a new chance to live his life.

St. Paul?

He was a very zealous Pharisee. He said, "As far as law is concerned, I'm blameless." He was full of self righteousness. "I am the best." But after meeting Christ, he realized that he was nobody. So that kind of understanding completely changed St. Paul around.

And finally Nicodemus?

He comes out three times in the gospel of John, but Nicodemus was a very respected person. He was rich, he was religious, he was a leader, he was political, he was powerful; he had everything. But somehow he met Jesus Christ and Jesus said to him that you have to be born again. You have to change from the bottom. And then he realized that what he achieved was not everything, and through the course of his life, he really changed.

Change is Happening

So all of these people were changed by Jesus Christ. They met Jesus Christ and they changed. When you meet Jesus Christ; change is bound to happen. Change is going to happen. When you truly meet Jesus Christ; change is going to happen. Then what are some of the questions about change? Like what is change? Why are people reluctant to change? How do people decide to change? What are the dynamics of change? These are the questions that we are going to explore together. It's difficult to talk about change because change is very complex and there is no single formula or theory by which people change. People change for all kinds of reasons. They walk around and all of a sudden, "I don't want to live like this," and they change. All of a sudden they change.

So we don't know exactly what is going on in the dynamics. Change is complex. It is hard to really pinpoint what changes exactly and the people who have changed, they cannot explain how they changed. They can't explain how they became Christian or how they became a followers of Jesus Christ. How they've changed from one life to another life. They themselves don't know how to explain what happened to them, but even though change is complex and difficult to explain, we know that change always happens. This past winter was very, very difficult. We had to have a worship service without electricity. It was so hard. But soon after we see this new bud, and then I hear the birds chirping and I was so glad. I was so happy that winter is finally over. Now it's summer.

Things always change. Children grow up fast. I still remember my daughter playing with the waves when we would go to a beach. She was so small. She goes out to the ocean. When the wave comes, she runs away but when the waves retreat, she goes out. And then now this year she says she's getting married.

Things change. Kids leave home. Old people pass away. There is nothing that stays the same. It is an illusion to say that everything stays the same. When you plant a new seed, it doesn't look like any changes are being made. But the next day, you walk around, you go here and there and then all of a sudden it has changed into the flower. If you put a camera there all night, then you will be able to see the whole process of change. We don't see it with our physical eyes, but change is always happening. That's why Heraclitus - he was an Ephesian philosopher - he said, "No one ever steps in the same river twice. The second time you put your foot in, the water is not the same water anymore." Different water comes in so no one ever steps in the same river twice. Nothing stays the same except one.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Everything changes in the world. That is the number one truth of life, but we are not very good at accepting this number one truth of life. And second, we are not very good at accepting changes. Elizabeth Lesser in her book, *Broken Open*, she said, "How strange that the nature of life is change. Yet the nature of human beings is to resist change." There's an old saying, "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks." Human beings are habitual animals. Once we are thrown into an environment, we get used to our circumstances

and once we are used to our circumstances we then become good at repeating the same task over and over. We do it mindlessly.

We don't like to change unless we have to. We are habitual beings, we are good at adjusting to our circumstances, but we are not good at changing our circumstances. We're only good at adjusting to our circumstances. We're good at adapting to a new pattern of life, but we're not very good at changing the pattern of our lives. In other words, we are good at being a passive recipient of change but not very good at being an active agent of change. Do you want to be a passive recipient of change or an active agent of change? We wait and wait until we are left with no choice but to make a change, and then we change. We don't actively search for a way to make changes.

You know, it is one thing to receive changes. It is another thing to make changes. What is your life like? Do you continuously receive changes or do you continuously make changes? What kind of lifestyle do you live? Do you just let things change you or do you yourself make changes in your lives? If you just receive your changes, then you have no ownership of the change, and if you have no ownership, then you have no responsibility for the change that you are making. This means that you always blame other people. You always blame the circumstances. "Oh, I didn't want to change, but these things change me." Parents cannot make all the choices for their children. The children need to have the freedom to make their own decisions and even the freedom to make mistakes. We cannot let our circumstances dictate the change in our lives.

If we do that, we will live our lives constantly blaming our circumstances. We won't feel the empowerment. American author and aviator Anne Morrow Lindbergh's said, "There is no sin punished more implacably by nature than the sin of resistance to change." For every change that happens in me, I want to be solely in charge of that. I don't want change just to happen and impose on me, I want to be in charge of changes. I don't want to receive changes. I want to make changes for every change. I want to take charge.

I'm not saying that you have to make a lot of changes. Some people make lots of changes, they change jobs and they change this and that. They change mindlessly. They feel bored and make changes on a whim. This is just escapism. By making changes, it only really changes the surface, but that doesn't make it "real" change. They are making only superficial changes,

but these are not considered “real” changes. They are only changing the exterior, not the true inner core of what really needs to be changed.

Change for Sake of Change or True Transformation?

In Korean, there is a good saying; difference between 바꾸는 것 and 변하는 것 (change). These are two different things. 바꾸는 것. Do you understand this Korean? 바꾸는 것/변하는 것. 바꾸는 것 is change just on the surface; you change your circumstances or sceneries, but 변하는 것 is of deeper insight; real inner change. Inner change is what is needed. Not only changing the sceneries and circumstances. In this fast changing society, I want to be awake, otherwise I'll be swept away by the changes that are happening within me. I want to be awake. What changes are happening in me? I want to be awake. I want to know. I don't want to be blindly influenced by changes that are happening without me knowing. If I'm ignorant, I'll just be swept away by the changes that are imposed on me.

I don't want my circumstances to shape who I am exclusively. I don't want other people, peers, or even my own parents to mold who I am. Truly. I want to be the main character of the change that happens in me and I know that realistically I have no choice but to be shaped by the change, against my own will, but I don't want to be shaped helplessly and mindlessly. I have no choice but to be shaped, but I don't want that to happen mindlessly and helplessly, at least I want to be aware of changes that happen in me. I don't want to live the same life simply because I've lived like that for the last 10 years.

I don't want to continue just because I've lived like that for the last several years. If I don't like a part of who I am and don't like what I am doing, I will change. I will not powerlessly just accept my life. That is essentially a defeated mentality. God accepts me for who I am, but God never leaves me there. God accepts me as I am, but God never leaves me there. God desires to change us. God always wants to take us to the next level. That's what our God does.

St Paul experienced this kind of change within him. He said, "In Christ, we are a new creation. Behold, the old has gone and the new has come." He boldly proclaimed this change that is happening within him, and this was St Paul's attitude about his life. Philippians 3:12-14. "Not that I've already obtained this or have reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own

because Christ Jesus has made me his own." Even St. Paul doesn't think that he's finished changing.

I'm not already there yet, but I press on and then he said, "This one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal." That is a true spiritual person's attitude. Instead of just accepting what you have right now, you press on to the end goal. You have so much potential yet why are you just sitting on it? You cannot just sit on it. You have to move on. What St. Paul talked about was the inner change within us. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, "Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." We all get old. We all get weak. But our inner nature needs to be renewed every day. So every day becomes a new life rather than another same day.

I want to live like each day is a new day. It doesn't matter how old you are. When you are renewed inwardly, then you become fresh every day. That is the kind of life St. Paul lived. If your life is full of worries and anxieties, if you're filled with anger, rage, and even hatred, if you're not sure about your future, if you're not sure about what you want to do in your life, if you're under your guilt and fear, if you're so conceded that you don't even feel for other people, then we all need change. You don't need to change your jobs or your circumstances. We need to change here; in our heart. We change because I want to be truer to myself. That's why I want to change, not to become great, but because I want to be truer to myself.

That's why we change. The Bible believed in the change. Jesus believed in the change. Stories in the Bible are stories of change. We already looked at all these people; Nicodemus, the Samaritan Woman and more. If Bible believes the change, if God believes in the change, if Jesus believes in the change, why don't we all believe in the change?

Do you believe that you can change?

We have the belief that we can change. Change is not a theory. Change is a spiritual reality. God is god of making changes. It has God's attribute, God's nature. I have done 27 years of ministry. I have seen so many beautiful changes in people. When people change it is so beautiful. They make other people so happy. Do you know who the greatest enemy of change is? Who do you think? Satan? It is much simpler than that; it is ourselves. We are the greatest enemy of change.

It is our lack of belief that change can happen. Our pessimistic belief has to be challenged. It is like poison. It kills the dynamics of change in you. That's why we don't change because of our pessimistic belief, because it kills the dynamics of change. We don't change. We get stuck in where we are. So then to make changes, the most important thing is your desire to change. When you have the desire to change, then change happens. That is the miracle. When you desire change, then change happens. George Bernard Shaw said, "Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." If there's a will, there's a way. We need to cultivate the strong desire to change within us since that desire sits within us. You will experience the miraculous movement of change within you. The more your desire grows within you, the more active the movement of change you will experience. You have to actually experience that movement within you. When you have the desire; that active movement of change is happening within your belly, within your heart, within you. You feel that something is changing, something is moving. When you have a baby, you feel that life moving within you. In the same way, when you have the seed of change within you, you don't feel flat. You feel something is moving within you. That desire creates the movement. Cultivate that desire and bear the fruit of change.

This is what Henri Nouwen said. "When the human heart is open and responsive to the movements of the spirit, healthy spiritual formation inevitably occurs." Having the desire to change and going through real change, these are two different realities. Why? Those are two different realities. What is the correlation between these two? What connects these two? Having the desire to change and actually changing. That is a mystery. What connects them?

It is not what that connects them; it is God.

It is God that makes it happen. You don't make real changes. When you have the desire to change, God uses that desire to bring about changes within you. 1 Corinthians 3:6, this is what St. Paul said. "I planted, apollo's watered, but God gave the growth." It is not I who brought growth but God who brought growth. These are the very famous words that Jesus said in the book of Matthew, "Ask now and it will be given to you." I divided it into 2, the left side is desire and right side is real change. "Ask" is your desire, but "it will be given to you" is the true change that happens. "Search and you shall find, knock and the door will open for you." So when you desire change, then actual change happens, but that is what God does. The important thing is

that we build the desire within us. How can we build the desire to change? If you build that desire to change, change is going to happen, but since we don't have that desire, we think that change cannot happen. "I will never change. I'll be like this for the rest of my life." Then change will not happen. But when you believe that you can change, when you have that desire to change; that will miraculously bring about the movement within you and bring about real changes within you.

The Pool of Bethesda

Have you heard of the Pool of Bethesda? There was a person who was sick for 38 years. The story goes when the pool was stirred up, the first person who goes inside of the pool will be healed. So all the sick people were gathering around the pool so they can see the water being stirred up. Just imagine what would happen when water stirs up. Everybody would try to go into the pool to be the first person.

All these sick people will do anything to be the first person to go in. So the Pool of Bethesda really means a "pool of mercy." What kind of mercy is that? So whenever the water is stirred up, we try our best to be perfect. That's just like us. Whoever is at the top, whoever's the fastest, whoever's the highest, they will be the one healed.

That's a myth.

When Jesus Christ came to this one person who was sick, who had been sick for 38 years, Jesus' question was this, "Do you want to be healed?" What kind of question is that? He was sick for 38 years and Jesus asked, "Do you want to be healed?" What a strange question, but the answer is even more strange. The man didn't say that he wanted to be healed. What did he say? "Don't push me into the pool, I cannot be the first person." He believes that change is only possible if he's the first person who goes into the pool.

Sometimes we have wrong desire, "But do you really want to be healed? Do you really want to be well?" In the back of my mind, I'm thinking only if I make this kind of money, only if I have this job, then I'll be healed. If we have this mentality, then we cannot be healed. If I truly have the desire to be healed then come to Jesus. Come humbly to Jesus. Jesus did not push him into the pool. He healed this man.

Ask yourself, do you want to be healed? Do you want to be well? Do you want to be whole? Prayer is our desire. Our prayer is our desire. When we pray, we express our desire. Every morning when we pray, we express our desire and God uses that desire to change us. In our world, there are so many things that kill our desire to change. Cynicism, skepticism, lack of experience of the wonder, stubbornness or helplessness. Due to this, people cannot cultivate this desire. No wonder we don't experience real change.

What is Change?

For me, change is a mystery. It's not a mechanical process. To me, change is mystery. How did I change? I don't know. It's a mystery. I still need to change but I'm so excited. How is God going to change me? In the last 10 years, he has changed you so much. The next 10 years, how is he going to change you? You might not even see anything immediate.

Very soon, God is going to change me tremendously. God is going to change each and every one of you tremendously. Change is beyond our understanding and beyond our control. Change is not just our own effort. Change is more than effort. Change is entering into a different level of reality. Change is entering into a different reality. The first reality is basic pleasure and entertainment. That's the reality we live in. You only need to think about how to have a good time and then after meeting your needs, you want to serve others, you want to help others. The second level of reality and then the third level of reality is ultimately being one with God; a union with God. Change is entering into different levels of reality, day by day, year by year. Change is possible because God is leading us, using our desire to change. Grow this desire within you. Don't stay where you are. Grow desire to become what you want to be. You will encounter the amazing miracle of change. The people who have no desire to change, they're the victims of fear and failure.

They have been defeated so much that they don't even have a desire to change. Don't live your lives as victims. Anybody can change if they have desire to change, you have the powerhouse within you. It's the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is your power to change you, "As the deer pants for the water. My Soul thirsts for you." Jesus said, "Anyone who is thirsty come to me. I'll give them the living water." When you're thirsty for change, you come to

Jesus and Jesus will give you that living water. Think about these questions. What do I want to change? How can I change? What do I want to change? How can I change? Asking the simpler questions are good enough. What do I want to change? How can I change? Did you know that your brain cannot refuse your questions? When you ask questions, your brain is working hard to find the answer. So if you ask yourself this question, "Why am I so stupid?" The brain continuously goes seeking for an answer. Your brain cannot refuse our own questions, so if you continuously ask that question, your brain will come up with answers to those questions, but if you ask, "What can I change? How can I change?" You will get answers.

Grow strong desire in you to change. You will find a way. You will be amazed by how God shows you the way. The artist Henri Matisse was diagnosed with cancer in 1941. From then on, he had to depend on the wheelchair. He could not draw anymore. He said, "My life after cancer was my second life," but that didn't stop him from creating art. He started using paper and scissors to express himself artistically, in his own way. This is what he said, "Only what I created after the illness constitutes my real self, free liberated."

When the change happens, life looks different. Life looks different. If you have the desire to change and then change starts happening in you. Your eyes will open and their life looks different. People look different. God will help you. The proverb says, "The plans of the mind belongs to mortals, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps." You don't make changes alone. You are not alone. God will help you. Think about yourself. Are you so defeated that you don't even have a desire to change?

Build that desire within you day by day and be awed by the mystery God brings in your lives. What you experience, the life you lived, is not everything. There is much more ahead of you, much more waiting for you. When you have the desire growing in you, then you will experience it. "I've never seen this before. I didn't know that there is such a beautiful thing in life," and then your eyes will be opened and life becomes alive.

You experience fulfillment of life, and that is a kind of change God wants to bring about. So during this retreat, think about what desires you have. What kind of change do you want to make in your lives? Don't just be a passive recipient to simply receive changes imposed on you. I'm not going to do that anymore. I used to do that. I'm not gonna make changes because they are

being imposed on me. I want to intentionally make changes with the help of God. I'm not gonna be swayed by the circumstances, by the forces of nature, by the forces of life. I'm going to be directed by the forces of the spirit. That's what I'm going to do for the rest of my life and you do too. How can the spirit guide you, lead you. What kind of a change does the spirit want to make in your lives? That is the power of empowerment.

Change Part 2

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

Yesterday we talked about the importance of cultivating the desire within us. Cultivating the desire within us is important because you don't want to be victims of the change that is imposed on you. You want to be active change makers, active agents of change. That means you have to know what you want to change. A problem we have is that a lot of people don't know what to change because they're so used to being changed and they don't even know "what do I need to change?" Even though there are a lot of changes that are possible, we do not really know what to change. That's why by cultivating the desire, you know what you need to change, you find out who you are. You find out what you need to do in order to have a more fulfilling life. You change so that you become truer to yourself, and without knowing what you are and what you want to be, there cannot be any change. That's why cultivating the desire within us is very, very important. In today's second lecture on "change," we are going to talk about the dynamics of change, and change itself in a way.

Change is a Journey

This is a picture I took in Galilee, the Galilee Lake. Change is a journey, not a one time event, even though on the surface it looks like one time event. For example, when you immigrate from Korea to Canada, you pack, you take a plane and you come to Canada. It's a one time event, it can be done in a day. In the morning you leave, and in the evening or the next day (probably) you'll get here, it's a one time event. When you send your kids off to school in different cities, you drive them, you find a room, you drop off some homemade food and then you say goodbye. Right?. It's a one time event. When your children get married off, you have a wonderful wedding and you let them go. In a day, it can be finished. Even when you send away your loved ones, you have a funeral and you bury them. They are gone from us, so it is a one time event. On the surface it looks like that, but it's not, it's never just a one time event.

When we talk about changes, we are not talking about what's happening on the outside. What's happening on the outside, what does that do to you as a person? What that does to you as a person is never a one-time event, it lasts a long time. What's going on inside of us is never just a one time event. It takes a long time for the inner change to take place. What's happening inside of us is not a mechanical process. What's happening on the outside is a mechanical process, but what's happening inside of us is not a mechanical process. It's complex and takes a long time, everybody is different. How people take what is happening outside differs, everybody is different. Immigration is not just packing up and coming to a different country. When you are in a totally different culture using a different foreign language and eating western food, what you're going through is much more than just moving to another country.

I still remember when I first came to Canada. Whenever I saw an airplane flying in the sky I thought, "Oh my goodness, that airplane must be going to Korea", even though it was not. I thought "That plane can take me to Korea anywhere, it doesn't have to be Seoul even though I grew up there. It can be Seoul, Gangwon-do, Shigol. Anywhere is fine, just take me to Korea." I don't know how sad I was whenever I was there thinking about Korea, it just saddened me a lot. But after 37 years, I don't feel that anymore. I look at a plane now, and think "Oh good. It's noisy. Where are they going?" I don't feel that sentiment anymore, but it took a long time. It's been 37 years, and I still remember what I did in Korea, it was beautiful. You could just go to the river naked and swim. It was natural, so everybody was naked, all the boys were naked. We swam and we caught frogs and then all kinds of things. It was a fun memory, but it doesn't sadden me anymore. It's now just a nice, good memory.

Inner Change

Our inner change does not happen overnight. Now I'm more comfortable here and if people tell me to go in live in Korea, I don't think I could. I visited Korea about once or twice, but I just wanted to leave as soon as possible. Once my job was done, I just wanted to come back home to Canada because this has become my home. So the real change is not what's happening outside, the real change is a change of the heart. That's the second point that I want to make, real change is a change of the heart. So a journey is not the outside journey, but a journey is the inner journey. It is journey of the heart, what's happening in your heart. So you have to pay attention to the

journey of your heart. What is your heart going through in the changes that are happening in your lives? That's what's important. You need to be aware of what is happening in your heart. What journey is your heart going through when things happen in your lives.

In the story of Emmaus, two disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus after Jesus died. Their journey was going towards the West in the evening, it's such a beautiful story, beautifully said. So they were walking very slowly like this. They followed Jesus for three years. They gave up everything but now Jesus had died on the cross and although they heard about Jesus' resurrection, they didn't really hear it. They thought that all their dreams were gone, so they were walking like this, very slowly towards sunset. On the road they met Jesus, he was talking to them. They couldn't even recognize who he was, but somehow when Jesus was talking to them, their hearts were burning. I mean it's a physical journey just walking on the road to Emmaus, but what was happening? Their hearts were kind of burning hot and then when they got to a place, when Jesus broke the bread, all of a sudden their eyes opened and then they could see Jesus. Until then they couldn't recognize who he was. So it's not really what is happening outside, because inside, their hearts were burning and then later their eyes were opened and they were able to see Jesus. So almost like our journey, we go to church or we have been to church all our lives, but at one moment our hearts are burning somehow. We have this burning desire within us and when our eyes start opening little by little and we see Jesus, we meet Jesus.

The next day in the morning the disciples were going back to Jerusalem and they made it by sunrise. In the evening it was sunset, now it was Sunrise. They weren't just walking slowly like before, they were running because they wanted to tell others the good news. That describes beautifully and graphically, the journey of your heart. What is most important is that you pay attention to what is going on in your heart. People somehow take the heart, very lightly. They think that heart is just related to feeling, but this is Henry Nouwen's definition of the heart. "Heart is not just feeling, heart is more than that. The source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and moral energies. It is the seat of the wheel. It makes plans and comes to good decisions. Thus the heart is the central unifying organ of our personal life. Our heart determines our personality and the place where God dwells, but also the place to which the evil one directs fear attacks causing us to doubt, fear, despair, resent, overconsume, and so on."

That's where the heart is. A lot of times we say "I don't have heart for it." , or "I don't feel like it," but the heart is more than feeling. When you say "Oh, I just feel like doing it.", it doesn't mean that your heart is doing it. Cultivating your heart is much more than just feeling for it. You know, having a heart for Jesus is much more than feeling for Jesus. So your heart is not feelings, it's not emotion. It's not a place of emotion, but it is a place of everything and is our core existence. A lot of people get emotional about praise and they think they are giving a heart-full worship. No, that's not heart-full worship, that's the emotional worship. Heart-full worship is much deeper than that. Heart-full worship is like spiritual worship, so you have to really pay attention to what is going on in your heart.

How does your heart react? For example, when you're fired from a company, how does your heart react? Let's say you just move, how does your heart react? You have to understand what your heart is doing inside of you. If you make changes without paying attention to what's going on in your heart, you don't really change. Yesterday I talked about (back eun neun go)/(pyeon ah eun go) with Bruce a little bit and we talked about the difference between them. You know when, for example, you bought a TV, you want to go and return the TV. (Mo rwa gu rae? Back eun da rae. TV-reul back eun da). That's physical, but (pyeon ah), you leave milk outside for long time then you don't say, "Oh milk is (back was seo). Milk is (pyeon eu seo), right? So a more quality change. So, if you make changes without really paying attention to what is going on in your heart, you'll just (back eu-ing) all the time instead of (pyeon ah-ing). I'm using different language here, right? So what is important is a (pyeon ah), not (back eun neun go). You're repeating the same thing in different ways. That's not what changes. You know?

Sculpting the Heart

Changes you're making on the surface only become a distraction. We need to see what's in our heart. One day, a little boy walked along the road and then found a sculptor. He was working with a marble, a bunch of marble. He was cutting it and then all that. After a few days later, he went by again and then he saw beautiful lion made from marble. And the boy, asked the sculpture. "How did you know that there was a lion in there?" This is a block of marble for the boy, but the sculptor saw a lion in the block of marble. What do you see in your heart that you will cultivate? Will you produce? What you see in your heart, that's what you're going to sculpt. If you see an image of God in your heart, then you'll sculpt the image of God. But if your heart is

filled with fear and doubt, then fear and doubt will be sculpted. If we have faith in our heart, trust will be sculpted. If we have arrogance and pride, then condemnation and negative criticism will be sculpt. It doesn't matter what, whatever you see in your heart will be sculpted.

Jesus gave us a parable of different soils. Well, what are four different soils, if you remember from Sunday school? What are those 4? So Simon said, "Path and thorny and rocks." So these three things. And then good soil of course. So I want you to just turn to your neighbour, three or four. Talk about what is on the "path" and what is a "stone" and what is a "thorny ground?" I want you to discuss it together just briefly, but just turn around with the people around you. Let's come back together. Let's first talk about the "path." What kind of heart is that? "Path." What kind of heart is that? Hardened? Maybe "rock" is more hardened. Sounds like it.

The "path," what kind of heart is that? It's kind of indifferent. It's more than a rocky path. You know, when you hate somebody so much, after that you become indifferent. "I don't care what you do." It's like even with God, almost like indifferent. You don't really care what God is. You're not even angry. Like nonexistent. "Hey, hello, I'm here." But you're almost nonexistent. This type of heart, what causes that? What causes this indifferent heart? Burnout? Uncultivated? Distracted? Lack of desire? This is almost like a dead heart. It's there, but it's dead. spiritually dead. If you don't take care of it. That's what happens to the heart.

What we're talking about is not, "Okay, so this person has a thorny ground and that person has a rocky ground and that person has a path." No. Within us, we go through all these four stages. It's not just certain people are rocky and people are thorny. No, we all go through it. If you don't take care of your heart, you become indifferent. Worship. Bible. God. It doesn't matter. Your heart becomes very, very indifferent. You need to take care of your heart. That's why cultivating your heart and cultivating your desire is very important. When you're indifferent, it is difficult at first. Once it is cultivated, it's easier, but if you don't have that, it is very difficult to cultivate that. That's an indifferent heart. The second, rocky ground is what? A more hardened heart. Either you're deeply disappointed or angry and something happened that you don't like. So it is a hardened heart. The third, thorny ground is what? Distraction, basically, a tangled heart. Your heart is so tangled so you don't even know what you want. At one point you desire god, but at another point, you desire the worst. You're so tangled, you don't even know who you are.

You really desire worldly success at the same time, you want to be spiritual. All kinds of things are going on in you. You're so tangled, it's complicated within you. So the seed cannot grow.

You cannot change the heart just like that. It's not like a light in which you turn the switch on and off. You can't do that. Either it is growing or not, you cannot just turn it on and off, the heart. So you have to be very careful with your heart. What is going on in your heart is very, very important. When you hold anger for a long time, it becomes hatred in the heart, hatred is formed in your heart. Once hatred is formed, object doesn't matter. You become angry person. Over little things, you get angry. At first, you began with concrete reason, but once that takes hold of your heart it doesn't matter, you become an angry person. If you hold greed for a long time, it creates selfishness and corruption in your heart. When you hold insecurities for so long, you become indifferent because you're so insecure that you don't want to do anything. You get a lazy attitude. You don't really care about what happens to you. When you hold judgmental attitude for long time, you become self righteous. Self righteousness is created in the heart. You have to be very careful. You'll experience all kinds of things anger, selfishness, all kinds of things. That's okay, but when you hold it too long, then certain negative things are formed in your heart. Then it is very difficult to really change. So the heart is very important.

Our Heart's Journey during Change

Now let us see what journey our heart goes through when the change happens. In external change, there is an ending and the beginning. The ending comes first and then the beginning follows. If you start a new job, then there has to be an ending to the old job and the beginning of the new job, so the end comes before the beginning. But the change of heart does not happen from ending to beginning, just like that. Our heart cannot go directly from ending to beginning. There is an in-between stage that ends and begins and there is an in-between stage.

When we send away our loved ones, just because the funeral is done, you cannot enter into the beginning. The ending is not done yet, the ending lasts much longer. There has to be a period of sending away the person. That's why we have things like memorial services to have a proper ending so we can go through that in-between stage. Physical separation happened, but the separation did not finish in our hearts. When my mother passed away,

for several days my mother kept coming to me in my dreams. In other words, the ending was not properly done yet. Even though the funeral was over still I was going through the mourning period. The ending was not done for me yet. The same happens with breakups, when you end a relationship it takes a long time for your heart to truly end a relationship. Our hearts do not move from the ending to the beginning directly. It has to go through the in-between stage.

When you go to the airport, you see the signs for departures and arrivals, but the real important thing is the travel itself. But the travel of your heart is not as simple as riding the plane, it's not just a mechanical process. There is a journey where you experience so much about yourself and about life. So in this in-between stage, you learn so much about yourself and about what you want and what you don't want. This in-between stage is not just a matter of getting rid of it or shortening it, you have to go through this in-between stage properly. William Bridges in his book, 'The Way of Transition,' he quotes Herman Hesse, a German novelist. His famous book is 'Siddhartha' and in that book, this quotation, "I have taken thousands of people across the river."

This is said by a boy, who helps people get to the ferryboat which carries people across the river. He continues saying "To all of them my river has been nothing but a hindrance on their journey. They have traveled for money and business to weddings and on pilgrimages. The river has been in their way and the ferryman was there to take them quickly across the obstacle. However, amongst the thousands, there have been a few, four or five to whom the river was not an obstacle. They have heard it's voice and listen to it, and the river has become holy to them as it has to me." It's a beautiful quote.

The transition is not something that you just have to crossover. It's something that you have to ponder upon. We like to move from one place to another as quickly as possible, like crossing the road. Don't stay in the middle of the road. Go across as quickly as possible, it's dangerous. But our change should not be like that. We cannot just move from one place to another, just like that. It's very easy to do, but without really understanding what your heart is going through, that movement becomes meaningless and also that movement can become hazardous to you too. We should pay attention to the in-between stages. When I look back, many times I have changed without this in-between stage and then later regret it. "Gosh, if I could think a little bit

more, if I prayed a little bit more, if I stayed in the in-between state little bit longer," then the change would have been much smoother. In the inner change, this in-between stage is not just an obstacle. For change, this in-between stage is not an obstacle, it's a very, very important place. To have a meaningful change, there has to be the proper ending of our past. There has to be a dying process of the old. This is what St Paul said, "In Christ, we are a new creation. Behold, first the old has to go before the new come." So the old has to go first, the old has gone and the new has come. You cannot have the new wine in the old wine skin. You have to let go of the old for the new to come. The old has to go for the new to come. Charles Du Bos said, "The important thing is this, to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become." If you don't sacrifice what you are, then what you could become, can never come.

The 4 Stages of facing Death

Elizabeth Kubler Ross, in her book, "On Death and Dying" explains how when a person faces death, they don't just face death. There is a process that they go through, that process first is denial when they have a terminal disease. "No, I don't have that. The doctors must be wrong, misdiagnosed." So they go to different doctors, different hospitals to really see whether they have that cancer or whatever. When denial can not be done then what they're going through is anger. They say "Why is this happening to me?" You get angry, you know? "I've done so much for God" and whatever, but you experience that anger and after that begins the bargaining process. "You know, God, if you make me live, then I will do this for you." Or something like that. When bargaining doesn't work, depression begins and they go into deep sadness, depression. Then finally, acceptance. Even one single death is that difficult to go through. You don't just go through from life to death. You go through all these in-between stages to face your own death. Change does not just happen. Just because you made a surface change, that doesn't mean that you made a real change. You have to go through a proper in-between stage. There has to be a stage in your heart for the real change to take place, so then you have to create a path for the heart to follow.

The Importance of a Proper Ending

To make change, you have to create a path. You have to learn to see how your heart moves. You need the guidance of the Holy Spirit at that moment when the change has happened, and when you go through the in-between

stages, that's when you need guidance of the Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to me? For example, when you break up with a person without having a proper ending and if you enter into another relationship, you'll most likely fail in that new relationship because you never learned from the previous relationship. You never learned about yourself. When the first relationship is over, you have to learn about what do I like about relationships? What do I not like about relationships? What kind of person do I really like, what kind of person do I really not like and what kind of person am I? What is the experience that I really went through with that person? You need to have a proper ending and you need to learn and grow from it in that in-between stage. Without learning, you just go right into the next relationship and it is bound to fail because you're going to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

When you talk to your parents they mostly talk about their past life. They talk about the Korean war, how they survived and how they came to Canada. Almost like a tape recorder, you know exactly the same order about 100 times a year. Why? The old is stuck there for them. For some other people I meet, they always talk about their university life. They always talk about it, what they did, and their stuff. For some KSM members I talked to, they always talked about their time in the army, saying "When I went to the army..." They continuously talk about that and in other words, that old is still there for them. It's not completely gone because it was a traumatic experience for them, so it is still there. People say what's done is done. No, what's done is never done. What's done is doing something funny even now, the past is not finished.

The past is not determined yet, the past is yet to be determined by our future. For example, if your past mistakes teach you, change you, and make you become a bigger person, then you will remember your past as a beautiful memory and as a worthwhile experience. But if your past mistakes only make you hardened, bitter and you become ruined, because of that, then that past becomes a nightmare, and a painful memory to you. So our past is not determined yet. The past is yet to be determined in your lives, depending on how your future is going to turn out. If you enter into the beginning without the proper ending, you're ending with linger around you and it will haunt you. You know what the scariest Gwishin (Ghost) in Korea is? Chenyeo Gwishin (Virgin Girl Ghost), "The virgin who died." They linger around, they haunt you, they never go away. The ending is not properly done yet.

So when the ending is not properly done, they still linger on. William Bridges had some very good insight about the ending so I quoted it for you, "The breakdown of the old reality releases energy that has been trapped in the form of our old lives and converse it back into its original state of pure and formless energy. It is recapturing that energy that permits us to be reborn new." So to be renewed, you need energy and only when that old is gone, that energy is released and then you can use that to start a new life.

Stuck in the Middle

What should we call the in-between stage? I'll call it "wilderness." In the Bible, the second book of the Old Testament is Exodus. Exodus is a book of the in-between stages. The Israelites left Egypt, but they have not arrived in the promise land yet. So the whole book is about them leaving Egypt but they have not arrived yet to The Promised Land, they are in the "wilderness." That's the in-between stage. So I'll call the in-between stage as "wilderness." Even Jesus, when he ended his 30 years of his personal life before he entered into a new stage of ministry, went to the "wilderness" to be tempted by Satan for 40 days. Saint Paul after meeting Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus before he entered into the actual ministry of Jesus, he went to Arabia. Not necessarily geographically "wilderness," but spiritually. That was a wilderness for him.

We all have this "wilderness" in making changes. The "wilderness" is not a place of certainty, it is a place of uncertainty. You left the old, but the new has not yet come. You have some regrets, some unresolved emotions, sentiments of the old. The new environment came and yet, your heart has not yet changed, only the environment has changed. Your heart has not changed and there's confusion and chaos. An Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, calls this "wilderness" as nothingness. "Emptiness, nothingness, emptiness." That's why people want to avoid this "wilderness." People want to avoid the "wilderness" in the process of change. Why? The "wilderness" is an uncomfortable place, it is a place of uncertainty. It is a place where you don't want to stay too long, but if you come out of it too fast, you'll go right back into the "wilderness."

You have to stay there long enough to learn everything that you need to learn. Then naturally you enter into the new, but if you just quit it, then you go right back into the "wilderness." People want to skip the in-between stage and go directly from ending to the beginning, but the wilderness is a place where

your heart changes. Your heart is prepared and the energy is created for the new. Our daily life is like that, we cannot finish the day and start the next day immediately. We need in-between stage; that's sleep. When you sleep, what happens? Your brain still operates, it configures what you saw, what you experienced, and what you heard. During sleep, it configures, so the next day you can start a new day in an organized way. "Wilderness" in Hebrew, is called "mid bar." It's strange, it's interesting. The same word, the word of God or the holy place (sanctuary) has the same root with the word "wilderness." So in Hebrew, "wilderness," and the word of God or holy place are the same.

Very interesting, their mentality is very interesting. The wilderness is the in-between stage, but it is a holy place where you listen to God. Of course, you may also experience temptation, confusion, difficulties, and loneliness, but you also experience the guidance of God. At this in-between stage you need to experience God deeply. When I left Korea, and when I came to Canada I was 19. In Korea, whatever problems I had, I have lots of friends so I could call them. We would meet, we talk over beer and then the problem was solved and I could move on. But when I first came here, I didn't have friends. I had nobody, nobody to talk to and I was so lonely. But you know what? At that time, I met God, because I had no human friends around me. I had to talk to God and there I experienced my own spiritual journey.

Importance of the In-Between Stage

I think the most important place in the course of change is this in-between stage. I think the most important place in the course of change if you want to make meaningful change, the most important place is the in-between stage for all of you. So think about in-between stage. When you're entering the in-between stage, just pay attention to that a lot and see what your heart is going through in that in-between stage. Depending on how we go through this in-between stage, the quality of our change will be very, very different. If you don't go through this in between stage very well, then the changes you're making a will not help you that much, but depending on how well you go through this in-between stage, your change will be a very, very meaningful change.

As I said it is easy to decide change. I can always change, but that's only physical change, but to grow and experience meaningful change, you have to go through this in-between stage very well. Don't try to shorten this stage,

when it is time to move on, you will know it. We talked about St Augustine, in a woman's Bible study last Wednesday. St Augustine is a saint but he was not always Saint. He loved this woman and his mother, Monica, did not allow her to marry her because her status wasn't good enough, but he really loved her very much so. But his mother did not let them marry so he had to marry a girl, but she was too young to have a sexual relationship. Since he could not have sexual relations with this woman that he married to, he fooled around. So he had a lot of sexual relationships with others and he was going through a tremendous in-between stage, had lot of struggles, in the "wilderness." At one point he went to his friend's house and then the kids were playing. He was sitting and the kids were playing outside. He then heard, "Tolle legit, tolle legit." That means in Latin, "Pick up and read it. Pick up and read it." So he looked around and there was a scroll of Romans he picked up and he started reading, saying, "Finish your nightly life and start the new day." That passage came and just hit him like a rock and at that moment he was completely changed and became a Saint later. So you should not shorten your in-between stage by your new initiative. When the time comes, it will happen. For example, somebody goes, "Oh, I didn't know want to go to a party and all that." and at that party you find your soulmate. It's not just an accident, the time came. You don't want to come to the retreat and then you came to the retreat and then all of a sudden, you become you a new person. You become ready for change. So, this in-between stage, you don't finish it by yourself. It just naturally happens and you will come out of it. You don't even know that you come out of it sometimes.

Our reading is not just passing time meaninglessly. Waiting is a very, very good time. In our waiting, life is being created. God is working on us in our waiting, our circumstances do not change us. We did not change ourselves it is God who changes us. For the seed to bear fruit, it has to destroy the shell that surrounds it. In this in-between stage, our shells will be destroyed. Florida Scott Maxwell said this beautiful quote, "Life does not accommodate you. It shatters you. Every seed destroys its container or else there will no fruition." Beautiful, isn't it? The shell has to be destroyed and where is the shell destroyed? In the in-between stage. Then the seed will bear fruit.

Elizabeth Lesser makes this confession in her book: "Broken Open." She wanted to find out who she was. She was crying and searching, but she just couldn't. Her old self couldn't really describe who she was and she wasn't satisfied with her old self. So she decided to do deep soul searching and went to Isreal as she was really searching for who she was. She was walking

around and she found this one antique shop. She went in and there was a middle aged man who greeted her and took her to the back of the store. In the back there was a picture of a flower and underneath the flower, there was a poem. She read the poem and at that point, it made her really, really cry. She was sobbing right there, it was a poem by Anais Nin. Anais Nin actually lived with Henry Miller and wrote this in the poem, "And the time came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

There will be time when you experience this. Just tight in a bud because you're scared, you're insecure, whatever. But that is more painful than taking the risk to blossom. That's when the in-between stage is over, that's when you enter into the new stage. When you go through the in-between stage, you will experience the renewal. There is pain, but there is joy in being reborn. The in-between stage is where our hearts are molded and shaped through deep reflection, deep understanding, and patient but fervent waiting. Listen to God and experience the presence of God, because if you don't do any of those, how can you be a new person? Reflection, deep understanding, patient waiting and fervent waiting.

This modern world makes me sick. So superficial. Just activities, lot of activities, a lot of surface things. Even movies, I don't want to watch them anymore. It's all special effects. No story, no heart, nothing internal. Nothing, no inner journey. This world just makes me so stuffy. We need to get out of it. I don't want this world to destroy my life. I have a precious life, hopefully at most 150 years. That's how long I want to live and for most of the 150 years of my precious life I have, I don't want to live in a stuffy manner. I want to be renewed.

I want to live a free, liberated life, and empowered life. I don't want to just live doing activities and activities. I want my heart to jump with rejoice and with joy. Live day by day with full of meaning. To do that, we have to go through the in-between stage, through reflection, prayer, patient waiting, and then you'll experience something new in your life. You'll see the change happening in you. The change happens in the wilderness, cultivate desire, and today we talked about dynamics of change. What is actually happening in the change?

So let us pray together. Lord, we thank you for the precious life that you have given to us as we live our lives. We ask you, lord, to truly bless us, bless

each and every one of us so that we may be filled with joy, and meaning. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Change Part 3

[Link to the Audio](#)

Introduction

The first session we talked about the need to cultivate desire because without cultivating the desire, what we are doing is we are just letting the change impose on us. Instead of us taking charge of the change, we just let the circumstances or people around us to influence our changes. So by cultivating desire, you know what you want in your life. And you know what change you want to make. So by cultivating desire, you actually get to know yourself very clearly and that is very important. And that's the first thing that we talked about.

In the second session we talked about that physical change is one time event. When you go through immigration process, you come from Korea to Canada, just one time event. When you change jobs, you just move. It is a one time event, but in that one time event, underneath the heart for heart, it is never just a one time event. The heart is going through a tremendous process of change and that begins from ending to beginning. When you start a new job, you end the old job and you start a new job. But the heart doesn't move directly from ending to beginning. There's in-between stage and in this, in this, in between stage, I called it "wilderness" and "wilderness" is "mid-bar" and it's from the same root word. It is called "wilderness," but also it is a "sanctuary." The holy place, the word of God. So in the in this "wilderness," we go through temptations, hardships and waiting, uncertainty, darkness, all kinds of things we experience in this "wilderness". But at the same time, at the wilderness, we experience God's presence. We experience God. We meet God. We learn God.

Moses lived a 120 years and the first 40 years he lived in a palace. The second 40 years, he lived in a nice pastoral place. So he really enjoyed his life peacefully. But last 40 years, God took him to the "wilderness" and Moses in that "wilderness," he met God most intimately. In the first 80 years, he didn't really meet God in a true sense, but in the wilderness, he met God in a very, very intimate way. In the same way in the "wilderness," we experience God. We meet God in an intimate way. When you go through changes, you will go through in-between stage. Your heart will go through in-between stage

in that, in between stage, learn to meet God and ask God for guidance and ask to be lead in that wilderness.

Who Am I?

Now, third lecture, we are going to talk about, we live in tension between who I am and who I want to be. This is always within us and if we always live in the tension between who I am and who I want to be. There are two forces within us and the first one is the force to push me forward, but second one is the force to pull me down. So we are living in this tension. There is a force that wants to go forward, but there's also the force that pulls you down so that you don't go anywhere. So we are struggling in these two forces and Saint Paul's confession is very clear about this tension. "I do not understand my own actions for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." I mean this is the Saint Paul. He doesn't understand his own actions. "I do not do what I want, but I do the evil that I hate to do," and that is our confession.

There's certain things that I want to do, but sometimes we don't do that. We do exactly opposite of what we don't want to do. Saint Paul was real person. He was not just religious fanatic. He was a real person and he experienced this struggle after meeting Christ. Before meeting Christ, he didn't have this kind of struggle. Only after meeting Christ, he became true to himself. When he was true to himself, then he recognized this power, this struggle, and this tension that exists within us. When you don't meet Christ in a true sense, you are not honest with yourself, but when you meet Christ in a true sense, then you can have confidence to be honest with yourself. When you're honest with yourself, you see these kinds of things and Saint Paul saw this kind of paradox within himself.

The Inner Paradox

I am strange. Within me, I see a paradoxical self. I see a battle within me. Not harmony, but struggle. Not coherence, but incoherence. That's what is in me, not just one nice image, but very many conflicting images are lying within us. It has taken a long time for this eye to be shaped. So now the eye that you have, was not shaped overnight. It had gone through so many things and as a result of that, that eye has been shaped. So many experiences. So many failures. So many of joys and so many learnings. All these things that this eye is experiencing, and then at the end finally eye has been shaped and formed. We are not fully aware of how this eye was shaped within me. We don't know exactly because a lot of times we did things that we were

unaware of, but somehow this eye was shaped and unfortunately because we are not perfect human beings, because we are sinful human beings, according to the scripture, we are sinners because we are sinners, some undesirable ugly parts. Undesirable parts were also formed in who I am, the part that I'm not satisfied with, the part that I don't want to accept, admit.

And that part is also within me because we are sinful human beings. We have this yearning to be what I want to be. We don't want to be stuck in who I am as I am. As I told you, God accepts me as I am, but God never leaves me where I am. God always takes me to the next level of life. That's who God is. So I don't want to be stuck in who I am. We want to be free to become who I want to be. There is no such thing as the saying, "Who I am." There's only, "Who I am being." Do you understand what I'm saying? "Who I am," is already the finished product. "Who I am being" is continuous product. Only God is "Who I am." When Moses met God, what did God say to Moses? "What is your name?" Moses asked. So what did God say?

Who I am Being.

God said. "I am who I am." So God is "Who I am," but we are never "who I am." We are always "who I am being." The kind of movement we want to create in us is the positive movement, spiritual flow. I mean this movement. The word movement is very important to me, that you have to create this movement within you. The spiritual flow. We have to create in us a spiritual flow where our soul can freely move towards what I want to be. Then movement has to be there instead of soul being stuck. That movement flows. Russian poet, Rumi said, "When you do something from your soul, you feel a river moving in you." You feel a river moving in you. When you truly do something from your soul, that's amazing. That's a river moving in you and Jesus said the same thing, "For those who believe that river of living water will flow." The river of living water will flow. Do you know what that means? The river flowing within you. So that movement, that energy, that flow, that's what we need. If anger is so strong in us, so if we are stuck in that anger, then we need to create a spiritual flow where our soul becomes free from the anger and experiences the freedom to love. You have to create that path so that your soul, instead of being stuck and bound by the anger, but moves beyond the anger and towards the freedom to love. Same with pain, same with insecurity. Our soul needs to be free to see change. In change, what is really important is your soul being free. Instead of your soul being stuck in where you are, your soul becoming free. That's what we need to experience.

Like the song “Hide Me Now” by Hillsong Worship. Hide me now, that we want to go above the storm. We don’t want to be stuck in the storm. We want to go above and fly above the storm. And this soul needs to be free. Otherwise, the real change cannot happen. When our soul is stuck, real change cannot happen. Then for our souls to be truly free, then there has to be room for our soul to move. When your heart is so small and your soul is kept locked, then you cannot be free. There has to be space where our soul can move.

Freedom of the Soul

There’s a famous photographer in Korea, a Bae Byung-Woo and then he only takes a pictures of pine trees. His pictures were in London. He did exhibition that got several hundreds of thousands of dollars for a one picture. He’s a very famous guy. I was reading his interview with a reporter and in that interview he said that he always takes pictures only in the morning and the reporter asked, “Why do you only take pictures in the morning?” From what he said it hit me. I thought what he said was so true. Dae Byung-Woo response was, “When the light crawls over the Earth, the space is opened up and the world is opened up.” Wow, yes, that’s true. When the light comes, light does not just come and shows things, but it opens up the space. And I realized when the light of Jesus Christ comes upon our soul, our heart, then it creates space for our soul to move. And that’s what Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free and the truth and life is the same thing. When the light or truth moment comes and then our heart creates a space and then our soul moves. And then we experience the freedom of the soul. When you have the truth moment, you’re no longer bound to your old self. And my friends, change takes a long time. Real change. For example, small boat, they can move around and maneuver very easily, but a big ship, they cannot move as easily, just to change in one direction, they go very, very slowly and turn.

And the real change happens. This kind of change is not change. Today, you do this and next day you do something else and the day after you do something new. That is not really change. What is that? That is (back eun neun go), that is just (back eun neun go), just changing the scenery. It’s not (pyeon ah neun go) its (back eun neun go). That kind of change is not a what we call change. The real change happens so slowly. You don’t even feel that you’re moving in different directions. That is kind of change that we are talking about. A big ship. That’s how they changed direction. There are two

kinds of behaviours that are within us. One, the behaviour that you are aware of and the other, the behaviour that you are not aware of. The behaviour you're aware of is doing things intentionally, but the behaviour that you are not aware of is that you automatically do it. Whether you like it or not, it becomes very automatic and that you do it. Having the light and knowing the truth will open up a space for the soul to freely move, but you should not end there. You need to shape the path, to truly change yourself. In your life, you need to shape the path after you realize that about yourself. You need to adopt a new habit. New spiritual habit, and that is spiritual discipline.

Dae Byung-Woo, famous photographer, his pictures are worth hundreds of thousands dollars, and you know what he said? "I take a picture every day as though I write a diary." I mean he knows all about pictures, he knows all about a camera, but he takes a picture every day just to create that creative path so that he doesn't lose that sense. In the same way, we need to create that creative path or spiritual path within us. Doing things habitually and mindlessly is bad, but doing good things and making it as a habit of your life is very good thing. You need to do that.

Good Habits Means Good Life

Immanuel Kant, very famous philosopher, he's known for his regular habit. Every morning he walked at the exactly the same time, so people in Konisberg, they know what time is by seeing Immanuel Kant passing by. "Oh, it must be 8:00 or 7:00 now." Because his routine was so regular, so we need spiritual discipline. If you want to change. Making a habit is very important in spiritual change. Once you make a habit, you know one thing good about making a habit is that you don't need self control. Once you make a habit, because it's not hard, it just becomes automatic, like a part of you. Every morning I'm usually the first one to wake up. So my routine is every morning I get up, I come up very, very quietly not to wake up anybody, then I wash whatever dishes that I have. Then I finish washing dishes and then I take out the garbage and then fill up with a new garbage bag and after that I put on coffee and then that's it. I do that everyday.

That's true. I mean it's not a big deal. It doesn't even take 20 minutes. Everyday you do it. It becomes routine. It becomes a part of you, you don't need self control to do that. You make the habit of doing it. You know, our self control is exhaustible. It's not limitless. It is exhaustible. There's an experimental puzzle. So two group of students, they gave the puzzle. One

group is unsolvable puzzle. You cannot solve it. There's no answer. Two groups, one group was given cookies before attempting to solve the puzzle while the other group was given radish. What the result was the group that ate the cookies gave up after 19 minutes with 34 attempts, but the group that ate the radish gave up after 8 minutes and they only tried 19 times. That is about half of the attempts the cookie group had.

So they realized that our self control is exhaustible because they use self control already by eating radish so they don't have any more self control to control themselves for solving the puzzle. Chip Heath and Dan Heath, his book "Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard." And this is what they said, both of them are professors. One is at Stanford, the other is a Duke University. This is what they said, "When people exhaust their self control, what they are exhausting are the mental muscles needed to think creatively to focus, to inhibit their impulses and to persist in the face of frustration or failure." So self control is something exhaustible. So when you make something a habit, then you don't need to use that self control and that you can use that self control for something else. When you want to make a habit, you cannot start with a big thing.

You have to start with a small thing. You cannot start with a big commitment. You have to start with a small commitment. It is better to read the Bible. If you want to read the Bible really seriously. If you want to read the Bible, then 10 minutes every day for two months is better than 10 hours in a day.

10 hours you read in a day is not helpful. What is more helpful is 10 minutes every day for two months. Then it becomes habit. You will create reading habit of the Bible. Whatever you do, think about doing it for the rest of your life, not just one year for the rest of your life. A reporter asked Mark Twain, novelist, "How did you become a great writer?" And this is what he said, "I start writing a sentence or so every day and without knowing, I became a writer."

So every day he wrote something and then without him realizing it, he became a writer. Mark Twain said that that same person said this. "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small, manageable tasks and then starting on the first one." So at the retreat you think about why do you want to change? And think of a one thing that you want to do for the rest

of your life. Very small thing, doesn't matter what it is, that is good for you, for the rest of your life.

Small Steps

Break down into smallest and start with that. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with the first step. The important thing is not to make lots of changes, but to create a path. That's what habit does. Important thing is don't make too many changes. Create a path. Once you create a path and then changes will happen. Shape the path. The path for the soul to freely move towards who I want to become.

The important thing is that you create a path and you have to start with small. Don't start with big. Start with small change because we human beings are very weak. You know how we are? There is a clock invented by Gauri Nanda, a MIT student. It's called "Clocky" and within two years he sold 35,000 units for 50 bucks in two years. This alarm has wheels so in the morning when the alarm goes off, it rolls around the room. So it doesn't just stay still, just jumps off and then rolls around. Just imagine you running around in your panties, you're running around trying to stop this machine.

Because we are so weak that they created this kind of stuff and it works. We are weak. So we have to understand that we are weak and we need to create small step at a time. Little by little. That's better than trying big things and then giving up altogether. Small things everyday.

The Rider and the Elephant

Jonathan Haidt, a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, gives us a metaphor in his book; "The Happiness Hypothesis," and then he talks about a rider and his elephant. This rider and elephant is within us. When the rider and the elephant are in sync, then that's great news. The rider thinks, "Okay, let's go that way." and the elephant has the power to move. So you go that way, but if the elephant refuses to move, then you cannot do anything about it. You can kick it. Yell at it, but elephant will not move and you cannot make the elephant move. And that's our situation. Many times, we ride the elephant, but this elephant does not move in the way you want to go.

That's why change cannot happen from your own will. "Okay. From today I'm going to change." You can't change. This elephant will not move, even though the rider wants to move. The elephant will not move just because you

have willed it to change. Elephant will never do any creative thinking or has any plan to change. Elephant doesn't do that. It is the rider who has the vision and creative thinking to change. It is the rider who does that, but to make effective change, you need energy, drive and the power of the elephant. There are few reasons why the elephant may refuse to go where you want to go. The first reason is when a certain habit is so strong in you, the elephant is comfortable with that. So automatically, the elephant will go do whatever you have been doing all your life, it's like automatic behaviour. It's like, before you enter a new situation you're thinking, "Oh, I'm not going to get angry," but once you enter in that situation you automatically get angry.

Anger comes out, or in certain situations, "Oh, I'm not gonna do that," and you go into the situation automatically. You're too weak to fight against the elephant because you have been doing the same thing for so long that way in your life. So to change the elephant, then you need to start small, little by little, like a big ship you have to slowly move around. You cannot just kick it and yell at it and you cannot just make a decision, so you have to create a path so that the elephant slowly moves into the new direction.

The disciples wanted to follow Jesus, but their old habits were so strong that they were always rebuked by Jesus. It took them a long time for them to truly be able to follow Jesus. Especially a sinful habit, it's very difficult to change; like greed, selfishness, self centeredness, pride, self-righteousness, timidity, stubbornness, inferiority complex, habitual lying. All these things are hard to change.

It is so deeply ingrained in us, almost a part of us. So if you live mindlessly, who leads your life? Elephant leads your life. The rider is just riding but the elephant is going wherever you have been going all the time. And that's why we feel so helpless. So we don't change it. We just let the elephant continuously move. We just sit on it rather than really taking the course of the change. Another reason for the elephant to refuse to go where you want to go is, this elephant is easily scared, very easily scared. So if the task is new, uncertain and too much, it doesn't move. The only way to change is to move the elephant. And you cannot do it by force. You cannot do it by your will. You need to create a path by your spiritual discipline. A new habit. Also, the elephant is easily scared, you need to break down what you want to do into manageable tasks so that the elephant doesn't get scared. To motivate the elephant, you need to shrink the change. If you try to do something big,

elephant will not take it. So shrink the change. John Wooden, UCLA basketball coach, he was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. He said this, "When you improve a little each day, eventually pick things occur. Not Tomorrow, not the next day, but eventually a big gain is made. Don't look for the big quick improvement. See the small improvement one day at a time. That's the only way you'd happens. And when it happens, it lasts."

Spiritual discipline is repetition. Doing something once in a while gets you nowhere. Until that task becomes part of you. You continue. Continue the repetition. You want another prayer? Pray every day. You read the Bible? You do it everyday. You have bad habits you want to change? Then change it little by little, everyday break it down smaller and do it everyday.

Faith the Size of a Mustard Seed

Malcolm Gladwell in his book, "Outliers". He said, "It takes 10,000 hours for anyone to be good at anything. 10,000 hours, you keep doing what you're doing then you'll be good at it. So if you want to do a new habit, new spiritual practice, if you do it for 10,000 hours, then you will master it. You will get to the level and then you automatically, you will be able to do it. To have a long term spiritual discipline. Break down the task into small, manageable pieces. Jesus' principle is mustard seed principle. The mustard seed is so small that you cannot even see it. The seed is so small, you need very special eyes or some magnifier to see it. That small mustard seed will grow large and the birds of the air will come. Jesus wanted you to start with, if you have faith of a mustard seed, then you will see that miracle. So from your faith of mustard seeds, a small thing, but you will see very big thing. So you need to continuously motivate yourself. There was a carwash experiment. One carwash they said, "Okay, if you get 8 stamps, then next a car wash is a free." So one set of car washes has 8 spots and the other one has 10 spots, but two stamps are already done for you. So for both, you really only need 8 stamp. The ones who have eight slots, only 19% came back, but the one with 10 slots with 2 stamped already, 34% came back. This is almost double the people because there's incentive since it's already started, so it's easier for you to follow. Horace in 60 BC said, "He has half the deed done, who has made a beginning" What is it in Korean? What is it? Shijaki Ban Ee Da (the beginning is half). This is what Horace said in 60 BC. At the first happiness seminar, I said, "I'm confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." Believe that. If you believe that, then something wonderful will happen. We are not alone.

We have a helper. The Holy Spirit. This holy spirit will guide your first step. You will not do everything. If you take one small step, the Holy Spirit can take it to the next level. It's not just what you do when you take a small step, the Holy Spirit will take you to the next level. Have courage to take the first small step. Think about what you need to change. Think about what you need to change.

At first, they'll be difficult. What do I need? Change? Because it's so buried too much inside of you. You won't even know what to change, but when you think about it slowly, you will be able to see, "Ah, I want to change this. I want to change that," and these things will come up. Then cultivate the desire to change, and when you change you will go through some dark times, disappointing time, difficult time. Wait. Don't give up. Meet God. Experience God. And then the little things start with a small thing and then do it every day. Then you'll be able to see the miracle of it.

Power of Community

We have a Bible study at our church every Wednesday morning, about 10-12 people come every Wednesday in the morning at 10:00am. Eight years? Eight years. Almost every Wednesday, the people came and at first, it was kind of difficult. First of all, bunch of women are sitting there and I'm the only man. They always talk about their husbands, they usually complain and I'm sitting there, "Oh my goodness. How am I going to lead this group?" And so it was really, really difficult in the beginning, but for eight years, every day is a small step. Every day, almost every week, they didn't really miss a single day. Now? It has become so mature. The kind of things that we learn, the kind of things that we share, it is so deep and profound. You won't see that anywhere else. I don't see that anywhere else. Even with theological students that I talked to, I don't get that kind of depth, but in that group I see and I hear that depth. So small beginnings create the miracle of the community.

Do you know how difficult it is to build a community? It takes long time and that community was built. So whatever you do, start with a small change and then see how God will take you and don't just look for the easier solution. Don't just look at easier solution. A man on the street at night, he was looking for something and the police came by, "What you're looking for?" And he said, "I'm looking for my key." "Where did you think you lost it?" "Oh, I think I lost at the end of the street there." "Why are you looking for it here? Why

don't you go there?" And the man said, "The light is better here." Don't look for the easy solution just because the light is better.

Find it where you think you lost your key. Even though it is dark. Visit the darkness. Visit the dark place. Visit the uncomfortable place. Visit the place where you don't want to go, maybe there is an answer there. Instead of always finding the easy answer and thinking that change happen.

This is all I have prepared for you in this seminar.

I hope that this helps you a little bit to get you thinking about that change. So the first night we talked about attitude towards change. Second lecture we talked about the dynamics of change and the third lecture we talked about the action to make a change. Thank you for listening and have a great pilgrimage. Thank You.