

95-01-22Mark

The truth about God and about Jesus Christ. And so, right in the first chapter, we saw how the ministry of John the Baptist summed up that ritual system. As he baptized the people in Israel and they came up out of the water, it did not change their hearts.

It didn't change their minds. He said, this baptism is supposed to represent a change of mind. This is a baptism of repentance, of metanoeo in the Greek, which is like metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis, a butterfly, changes its body, changes its form, its morphos. But metanoeo is a change of mind, some transformation that takes place. Israel was in need of transformation in every generation, but particularly at the time of Jesus Christ.

It peaked at that time. You notice that there was a very high level of demon activity. There was a very high degree of obsession with the keeping of the law, so much so that people were blind to the very presence of God walking among them.

And this is a very dangerous thing. We can look at the Pharisees and the scribes and say, that just seems incomprehensible to me that Jesus Christ could be walking around in the land of Israel and they would not recognize him. But what it tells us is, it is possible for any of us to miss the reality of God's presence and miss the reality of God's truth if we get wrapped up in something that is a substitute, something that we put in place of the truth of God.

That contrast was introduced in chapter 1, and in chapters 2 and 3, we saw this great X-shaped structure and the parallelism of the top of the X and the bottom of the X. In the middle of the top, in the middle of the bottom, and then right there at the center, the point that Jesus was emphasizing. You may recall that the point we saw in that outside bracket, where Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath as we began, and he cast the demon out of the man that day, and later on he healed Peter's mother-in-law. And then just this last Sunday, we saw the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

And as we look at those two episodes, and in accordance with what the author is asking us to do by placing them in this structure, we compare those two episodes, when Jesus is in the synagogue on the Sabbath. In the first case, he cast the demon out of the man, and what was the response? This records the people's response to Jesus. They say, what is this new teaching? What is this authority he has that the demons obey him? And so they're asking the question, what does this mean? Here's a man that's doing extraordinary things, what does it mean? And right away we know that there's a problem, because this is Israel.

These are the people of God. These are the people that have the Torah. They have the law and the prophets.

They've got the entire Old Testament canon. They've had it completed for some 400 years. The

identifying marks of the Messiah have been made manifest in front of them for about a year at this time.

And they're still asking the question, what is this? It reminds us later on, you recall just shortly before the cross, some of the Pharisees come up to Jesus and say, show us a sign. He has been traveling the land for three years, teaching and healing and fulfilling every identifying mark of the Messiah in the Old Testament. And they come up to him at the end of that time and say, show us a sign.

And that question indicates that the information is not sinking in and making a difference. It's not creating recognition. It's not being the occasion for faith.

And we have to watch out that this doesn't happen to us, because it is very easy to see in someone else's example, but it's extremely difficult to see in ourselves. It's like we're spiritually far-sighted. We can see things that are at a distance, but things up close are much more difficult to perceive.

And all of us have this problem. It's just a part of being human. And the obstruction in our eye is primarily our ego, our view of ourself, and what we want others to think of us as they view us.

And we protect that. We have a defense mechanism that instantly throws up barriers any time we're threatened, any time something pierces through our sense of well-being, our sense of what the psychologists call self-esteem. And our generation has become very obsessed with self and with the preservation of self and with not attaching any blame or any wrong or any sort of guilt to oneself.

I was listening to a song that a group wrote here recently that talks about, oh, the words talk about how every time you turn on the television, you see someone who is communicating all of their problems, and it's a result of their childhood, it's a result of some terrible experience, some abuse and so forth, and they're pointing their finger in every other direction. And the chorus of the song is, get over it. Get over it.

You're just advertising your weakness and your unwillingness to recognize your own responsibility in life because for every person that comes from a background and blames their failure in life on that, there's someone that came from that background or worse that has taken advantage of opportunities, has used the resources that God provides, and has seen God turn their life completely around. And we have no one to blame but ourselves. And we're going to see this issue of personal responsibility as something Jesus homes in on.

But in that first, that outside bracket, the people are reacting to Jesus. And after he has demonstrated who he is, they're still asking the question, what is this teaching? What is this authority? When they ought to know better. And that's the point.

They ought to know better. They're Israel. They're the people of God.

They've been trained in the law. And they ought to know. Those are identifying marks of the Messiah.

And the other corresponding episode in the synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus sees the man with the withered hand and he sees the Pharisees who have come on the Sabbath with the express purpose of destroying him. Of finding an occasion that they can accuse and eliminate him from the thinking of Israel. They don't want him to preach.

They don't want him to be an issue anymore. And Jesus sees them and sees the hardness of their heart. And where in the first case we had the people's reaction to Jesus, now in this closing bracket we see Jesus' reaction to the religious leaders.

He is grieved. He is angry. He's grieved at their hardness of heart because when they saw the identifying signs and who should have known better than the teachers in Israel? What is their response? What is this teaching? What is this authority? We've got to eliminate this man.

Let's watch and see if we can find an occasion to bring him down. To get him out of consideration. Then we have a second bracket inside that that started out with the healing of the leper in the first case.

The opening of this second bracket is the leper who comes and says, I know that if you will you can make me clean. And Jesus says, I do will. Be clean.

And this is a picture of life from death. Leprosy was a picture of death. It was a living death.

It excluded someone from the entire life of Israel. They couldn't come near. They couldn't be touched.

They couldn't worship. They couldn't shop in the bazaars. They couldn't walk down the streets.

They had to live outside the camp. And Jesus said, I am willing to restore you to take care of that situation in your life. That living death that you're entrapped with.

And so Jesus healed him. And he said, now, as a result of this, I want you to do something. And in no uncertain terms, Jesus commands him to go and obey what he tells him to do.

He says, go obey the law. Go fulfill the ritual that Moses commands. Jesus did not eliminate the Mosaic law, did he? He didn't say, well, I'm healing lepers and this is kind of a new thing, so just tuck away your Old Testament there.

You don't really need that information anymore. He said, pay attention to what your Bible says. It says when a leper is healed, here's Leviticus chapter 14, go do that as a testimony to them.

And so Jesus heals him, gives him new life, and he responds in disobedience. He responds with what he thinks is a good idea. I think I will travel the land and give my personal testimony, and that will be a wonderful thing.

And this is what he does, and it was the wrong thing. It is not what God's word commanded him to do. It wasn't what the personal, verbal command from Jesus Christ standing in his face.

How could it be more plain? And yet he disobeyed. Now the closing part of that second bracket is the disciples pulling the wheat off of the grain. This is something that sustains life.

In the opening part of the bracket, Jesus gives new life to a person, and he says, now obey. Perform this ritual as an expression of this joy and this enthusiasm and this gratitude that you feel in your heart. Express that by obeying.

And the man expressed it in an illegitimate way. Now in this closing part of the bracket, here are the disciples on the Sabbath pulling the wheat and eating it. They're sustaining their life.

They're gaining nourishment because it's necessary. And they're doing it in a perfectly appropriate manner. But they are attacked for this by those who do not understand what the Sabbath means.

We spent some time studying what God considers the Sabbath to be. He says, don't use the Sabbath as a yoke. Don't use the Sabbath to beat down your fellow believers, to place requirements on them, to hold a yardstick up to them and measure them to see if they measure up or not, to see if they need to improve or not.

It is not our place to measure one another. It is not our place to judge one another. Now we can certainly look and we can perceive and we can draw conclusions about each other and that is sometimes necessary to fulfill our God-given responsibilities.

The man in a household who is the husband has a responsibility to evaluate whether or not his household is orderly, whether or not his children are obedient, whether or not his financial responsibilities are being fulfilled, whether or not his responsibilities to other members of the family, parents and so forth are being fulfilled. He has to measure that and that's going to involve evaluation of his wife and his children and that's a God-given responsibility. The members of the board of a church have to evaluate the pastor, have to evaluate one another.

And if there is error, if there is sin, if there is failure, it is their responsibility before the Lord to discern that, to point it out and to seek to correct it. That's a God-given responsibility and that does not fall under judging. Judging is when we set up a standard ourselves and measure someone and find them short and then we decide that we will now inflict a penalty on that person.

We are required to perceive error. We are required to mark those among us who do not follow the faith. But if we step over the line and say, now that I have identified this individual, I'm going to

punish him or her.

I'm going to inflict a penalty here. I'm going to reduce their reputation by talking about them. I'm going to hurt them by cutting off my good will and my favors and my expressions of love to this person.

I'm going to make them feel that they're wrong. When we step over that line, that is judging. But we have a God-given responsibility for discernment in many areas.

And so we have to distinguish where we cross that line. And it goes back to the same criteria by which we measure everything we do. Why do we do what we do? When we mark an error in another believer, why are we doing that? Do we want to gain a sense of superiority? Do we elevate ourselves by tearing others down? Do we get a perverse sense of satisfaction out of communicating the faults of others to our fellow believers? Why are we doing what we're doing? Those are all sinful.

But there is a time, I mentioned recently, that there is a church in the circle of my acquaintance that has had to dismiss their pastor because they discerned in his life something that disqualified him. It's a very painful thing, but it's necessary. And a lot of the people in the church have wrestled with application of the principles.

Do we focus in on the failure of this man, and then are we judging him? If we take any steps, shouldn't we be compassionate? Shouldn't we forgive and forget and try to move forward? And like everything else in the Christian life, there is a balance. And we have to look at where are our priorities and what is our responsibility. And there are areas where God has assigned us a responsibility for discernment.

I have a responsibility to you for leadership, for pastoral care, for teaching. And if I fail in those responsibilities, it is the board's responsibility to evaluate me and to take steps to correct it or else to remove me. And that is a God-given proper function.

And likewise, if someone in the congregation, it wouldn't happen with anyone we have in our current membership, but as we grow and expand and some wolf in sheep's clothing comes in and begins to spread dissension and perhaps becomes an incurable gossip or a terrible backbiter or stirs up division in the church, then it's my responsibility as pastor to identify that person and to either motivate them to correct that problem or to eliminate them from our fellowship. That's my responsibility. It's the responsibility of discernment.

Discernment comes from meditation on the Word of God and application of it to our experience, setting our priorities and following them in the light of God's Word. Israel's failure was not discerning, not applying the Word of God, not looking in the Word as they evaluated Jesus Christ. They jumped to a conclusion, a false standard of measurement.

And that's something we must avoid at all costs. We are a Bible church. We have learned the Word of God.

There have been faithful teachers in this church for many, many years. And God will hold us accountable for what we know. We don't have an excuse for failing in this area.

We don't have an excuse for browbeating one another, for pressuring one another, for causing one another to conform to some standard that isn't even found in the Bible. And if we do that, it's like the sin of Achan in the camp. God will not bless the camp until that sin ceases.

And I will say this. I think that we are in the process of focusing on ourselves and ensuring that we are right before God as a church because that is an essential for God to bless us, for God to bring us new believers that we can encourage and that we can teach and that we can be shepherds for, that we can help become disciples as Jesus commanded us. We can't do that if there's sin in the camp.

We can't do that if we have a harsh and critical spirit. We can't do that if we are measuring the people that come through our door to see what their potential is or how they dress or how they speak or what part of town they come from, what race they may be. And we have to be very careful because a lot of churches might be able to get away with that in some sense.

But God will hold us accountable because we know better. We're a Bible church and we've been taught. And we have a responsibility to apply what we know.

Jesus is going to harshly judge the religious leadership in his day. Why? Because they said, we see. Because they had the information.

They were students of the Old Testament and they did not use it properly. And their judgment is harsh because they ought to know better. Israel as a nation should have known better.

And because they did not apply what they knew, because they didn't use what God had given them to identify the Messiah, their judgment is harsh. And that is true of us. We have a critical responsibility to use the Word of God like a laser beam in our own soul to judge ourselves and measure ourselves.

That's our first mission field. That's our first ministry field. That's our first responsibility before the Lord is to ensure that we don't have some area of failure, some area of repetitive, ongoing sin that is keeping God from being able to do his full and best work in our life and by extension in the life of our church and the fellowship that we enjoy.

This was the failure in Israel. Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, is standing in their midst. They cannot see him.

He cannot minister to them. And why is that? It is a decision. It's a pattern of decisions.

It's a set of priorities in the soul. And it can happen to anyone. It can happen to me.

It can happen to you. It can happen to any believer in Jesus Christ. And we cannot be too careful.

We cannot be too vigilant in this area. Nobody in Israel thought that they were wrong when they misidentified Jesus Christ. Nobody thought they were wrong when they condemned him.

The Pharisees didn't get together and say, let's all get together and make a big wrong decision. Let's bring down God's discipline on our nation and do something really spectacularly evil. They thought they were right.

They thought they were preserving the Sabbath. They thought they were upholding the holiness of God and his law. What a subtle trap to fall into.

How easy it is to justify wrong thinking in this area. We have to seek God. We have to meditate in his word.

We have to come before him with a sense of our need, with a recognition of our own tendency to fail. Jeremiah 17.9 The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can understand it? And just about the time that we get satisfied with our level of understanding and our level of operation in God's plan and the feeling that we've pretty well got all the loose corners nailed down, that is the time to be most vigilant.

To look at ourselves in the harshest light. Because as soon as we drop our guard, the enemy will come in. And our sinful nature will skew us and will pollute the truth in our soul and cause us to be ineffective in God's plan.

We see this in that bracket with the leper being healed. New life requires obedience from the heart. And in the bottom side of that bracket with the judgment of the disciples and their working on the Sabbath and they completely misunderstood the purpose of the ritual.

So this ritual system, this was the means of expressing what's inside the soul. And that ritual system in the Old Testament could either be a wonderful way of worship, a wonderful way of testifying about the grace and the glory of God, or it could be a way of manifesting the hollowness and the emptiness that existed in those souls, in those lives. The same ritual system could either be an asset in God's plan or a condemnation of the people who misused it.

And that's where we stand. In the first case, we have the leper who just completely disobeyed and didn't bother to perform the ritual at all. In the second case, we have the Pharisees who performed the rituals, but they misunderstand it.

They misjudge. They misapply. They use it as a club to wield over others.

Then in that third and inmost bracket before the center section, we have, in the first case, the

paralytic man being let down through the roof. And Jesus says, My son, your sins are forgiving you. And immediately this raises the hackles of the Pharisees.

Who can forgive sins but God alone? And Jesus says, Just what we've been talking about. Doesn't this give you a clue as to who is speaking to you? As to who is performing these healings? You're right. None can forgive sin but God alone.

Good. Good response. Good memory.

Good recognition of what the Old Testament teaches. Now, apply it. And what did they do? They rejected.

They condemned. They accused Him of blasphemy. They had the knowledge right there.

Who can forgive sins but God alone? They spoke that truth. And yet they couldn't bring it over into application. They couldn't recognize the presence of the Son of God and acknowledge that He was doing right and they were doing evil.

This would require admission that their dedication to the ritual system had been wrong, that their emphasis on form over content was wrong, that they had dedicated their lives and in many cases spent years barking up the wrong tree and it was too much. They couldn't do it. And in standing in the presence of the Son of God, they made a wrong decision.

It was too much pride, too much ego, too much investment in that life of religion and that reputation that they had built up to come and acknowledge that they were in error, that the Son of God had come and shined the light in a dark place. And the bottom part of that bracket was the questioning of the Pharisees. How come the disciples of John and the Pharisees are fasting and your disciples don't fast? Once again, a great contrast between can't you tell the difference between the form and the reality? Can't you see the difference between a ritual that is designed to express holiness and the presence of holiness right in your midst? The disciples aren't worrying about this fasting thing that had been made up in Israel as a measure of holiness because they've recognized the reality of Jesus Christ in their midst and they're pursuing Him.

They're listening to His words, following His teaching. They're not following this made up system of not partaking of food on Mondays and Wednesdays and every third feast day and the fifth and the seventh month and all of these other man-made extrapolations from the Mosaic Law. Nowhere in the Old Testament did it command Israel to fast.

But they had said, this is a good thing. This reflects my humility. This reflects my spirituality, my closeness to God that I'm willing to deny myself.

And in reality, they were filling themselves. It was a self-serving ritual because it advertised to others how holy they were, how right they were, how willing to sacrifice they were on God's behalf. Fasting could be a wonderful thing.

There are situations in the Old Testament where fasting reflected some great truth or some great burden that was laid on someone's soul. But that manifestation could be taken and twisted just like every other ritual in the Old Testament and used to demonstrate the hollowness and the lack of life in the souls of those people. And so we see that contrast in the reality of Jesus Christ when He says, look, I'm going to demonstrate My authority to forgive sin so that you'll know that I am who I say I am.

You've already seen My authority over demons. You've already seen My authority over disease. And I'm trying to show you that I have the authority to say your sins are forgiven you.

And He says to try to convince you that I am who I say I am, I will say to this man, rise, take up your bed and walk. And of course, that man obeyed the voice of the Lord, took up his bed and walked out. And with all of this evidence, they are mystified.

They're puzzled. They begin to react against Him. They begin to reject Him and they begin to plot on how they might kill Him.

The same thing in this case of fasting. Jesus says, look, don't you recognize My authority? I am Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man.

Man wasn't made for the Sabbath. These rituals are supposed to be a way of expressing and bringing out what's on the inside. God has given you a legitimate way to apply and to reflect what you know about Him.

And you've turned it all backwards. You're trying to use the rituals as a means of elevating yourselves. And finally, there at the very center, we see the heart of the matter.

Why is it that the Pharisees have such a difficult time recognizing Jesus Christ? Why is it that Israel follows Him around and sees all of these miracles and yet cannot acknowledge Him as their Savior and as their Messiah? It's right there at the center of that chiasm. At the very middle part there, we have Jesus' words as He is eating with the sinners. And the Pharisees are completely mystified.

This is just the height of impropriety. If this is the Messiah, how could He possibly be hanging around with these lowlifes, going into their house, eating with these people that are obviously by every standard that we hold dear, these people are rejects, prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners. And here He is, hobnobbing with them, talking with them, laughing with them, eating with them, enjoying fellowship with them.

And the contrast is sharpest right there at that center point. And He says, I am not the doctor who comes to cure the well. It isn't the well who need a physician.

It's the sick. It's those who acknowledge their need. And that idea of sickness and wellness isn't in

the eyes of the Pharisees.

It's in the eyes of each individual person. Each of us, we have to look at ourselves and say, am I well or am I sick? Am I healthy and have no need of a physician? Or is there still work for God to do in my soul? And the decision we make at that point is going to drive everything else. That is going to be the basis of how we view our rituals, our church life, our personal lives.

Everything else is a reflection of whether or not we start at that basic level and recognize that we have a need. We have been saved. We have eternal life.

There's great positional truth on having the righteousness of God in Christ, on having blessings in heavenly places and everything else. But operationally, experientially, day to day, do we recognize our ongoing need for the Savior? Do we recognize that we're still sick? There's still sin in our life that needs to be eliminated. There is still thinking that we need to adopt.

There are promises of God that we need to trust. There are opportunities to make decisions and perceive and set priorities. That is the field that God's Word wants to come into and be planted in and grow up in and produce fruit.

We are sometimes so anxious to look around us and see the needs of others that we fail to acknowledge our own needs. The Pharisees were expert at this. Look at all of these sinners.

Look at all of these crippled people. There are some people that have problems. I have no problems.

I'm religious. I fast. I give money at the synagogue.

I have memorized the law and so forth. It's critically important for us never to lose the recognition of our own personal need. That's where we start.

And that recognition is the spark that sustains our humility. It keeps us from becoming proud. It keeps us from becoming arrogant.

How can we go and judge others? How can we go and measure them with a ruler and find them coming short when we have, first of all, looked at ourselves and measured ourselves and said, you know, I've got several specks in my own eye. I don't really have any business going over here and finding all of these huge problems in the life of someone else. I need God to work in my life.

I still have areas where God can help me in the areas of bitterness. Mental attitude sins are the most overlooked place in our soul. The attitudes that we have, the bitterness that flashes up, the envy, the jealousy, the worry.

Worry is a huge one because many times our security is threatened and we tend to think, well,

what's going to happen? If I don't take some action, disaster will strike. And our first instinct is to become all elbows and knees and engage in some plan of action. Let's do something even if it's wrong.

If we just sit still, we don't know why terrible things are going to happen. And we don't turn to our Lord and we don't claim His promises and stop and think, now, why has God allowed this situation in my life? What does He want me to trust in? How does He want to sustain me? How is He going to show His power in this situation? When this crisis resolves itself, who's going to be glorified? Who is going to be at center stage when this is all over with? God or me. God or the bank.

God or the insurance company. God or the government. Who's going to get the credit for resolving this crisis? God allows weakness in our life because that's where He manifests His strength.

But if we forget that and we lose sight of our need and we think, I'm sufficient. I can handle this. I've got a plan.

I know what we can do. We miss the opportunity for God to work in our lives and this is His primary field of operation. God is not primarily concerned with evangelizing the world.

Now that sounds like a shocking statement and I have heard dozens of wonderfully crafted presentations on how God has as His main business evangelizing the world. God has already evangelized the world. He's evangelized it in every single generation.

The Holy Spirit has gone to the soul of every human being that comes to any stage of thinking God has done that. God has no trouble evangelizing the world. God wants to use us.

God wants to work in our lives and prepare us so that we can be a part of the work that He already has done. But He doesn't need us for that. If there weren't people to speak out, the very stones would cry out and communicate the glory of God.

God has put the knowledge of Himself in the heart of every man, it tells us in Romans 1. Now evangelism is important. It's a wonderful thing that can occur in our lives, but it comes as the fruit of a life that has life inside it. You don't see the Pharisees evangelizing, and yet they were believers in God.

They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. And they made the biggest mistake of their lives when most of them failed to identify the Lord Jesus Christ. We can do that same thing and we can get caught up in form over function.

That's the focus of this whole chiasm, this whole structure and mark at the beginning, starting with the ministry of John the Baptist. It is a knock in the head. It's a slap in the face.

It says, look, notice the difference between the reality of Jesus Christ and the truth of His message and the life that He brings and the dead forms, the dead rituals, the dead human effort, the dead human appearance, things that we so easily fall into. And we have to watch. We have to be vigilant.

It is not enough to assume that because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world, that everything is going to be rosy in our life and God is at work to will and to do His good pleasure. God is at work in those who recognize their need for God to work. Jesus went to Capernaum and could do no great work there.

Why? Because there was so little faith. God came to Israel in the person of Jesus Christ and couldn't convince them of His own character and His own presence. Why? Because the vast majority of them didn't recognize their need.

They didn't think they needed that kind of a Messiah. They wanted a political answer. They wanted someone who would sustain them and tell them what they wanted to hear, that they were doing a good job with all the rituals.

They missed the point and we have to be so vigilant and so careful that that doesn't happen to us. So, right there at the center, as Jesus ate with the sinners and the tax collectors, He did that for a reason. It was to point out the contrast between His thinking and His viewpoint and that that prevailed in His day.

Now, the disciples that followed Jesus, we're going to see in the upcoming section of Mark how the disciples follow our Lord. And He's going to withdraw from the synagogues. He's going to withdraw from the places that He started out teaching.

And He's going to concentrate on ministry to His disciples. And many times, we are going to find ourselves in a minority. You know the great passage where Jesus says, Wide is the way and broad is the gate that leads to destruction.

Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life and few there be that find it. If we can perceive this truth and if we start making it a part of our thinking and a part of our daily priorities, we're going to find ourselves in the minority. That's what God has told us.

It's not a popular view because it forces us every day to recognize our sinfulness. It forces us to recognize our need and we don't like to do that because we're inherently proud. We're inherently happy with ourselves and we don't like to have ourselves brought down.

It's one of the great things that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. It keeps telling us how bad we are. And of course, man's tendency runs to something that tells him how good he is and how wonderful he is.

And we're not here for that. We're here to be changed and transformed by God's power. That's the message in this section and that's what Jesus is going to go on to teach in the upcoming sections of Mark.

So the challenge that is left with us is to look at ourselves and to recognize our need and then to do something about it. To be obedient from the heart. To not let our forms and our worship life and our day-to-day habits be an end in themselves.

But to be changed on the inside. To have the life of God and the power of God work itself from the inside out so that when we do assemble, when we do sing, when we do play, when we do give, when we witness, when we talk to those in our periphery, our family and our friends about the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a life and a vitality that comes from God's Word and God's Spirit that makes those things a genuine expression of the vitality of God's form. I'll close in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for the privilege we have of being called by Your name. We thank You for the life that we have in Jesus Christ. And we pray, Father, that we will not stop at the point of salvation or we will not stop at the point of having learned several of the basic truths of the Word of God and cease to be obedient and cease to be hungry for the transformation that comes through Your Word and through Your Spirit.

We pray that You will show us where we fail, show us where we fall short, show us the sin that remains in our life to be excised by the power that You bring to us. We pray that we will be transformed, that we will be changed by the renewing of our minds so that we will be equipped for every good work and we will be able to perceive and to exploit those opportunities that You bring to us each day to reflect Your glory and to bring credit to the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. We ask it in His name.

Amen.