

# The Witness of Christ

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     So let me pray for us as we start. Oh Lord, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for the message and the greatness of Christ.
- We thank you for his glorious role in the world and in our salvation, Lord. And Lord, we pray that as we just come into your word, Lord, I pray that we would hear your words, Lord.
- Lord, I pray that I would be faithful to present your word as it is, Lord. Lord, I pray that your spirit would move among us encouraging us and convicting us and changing hearts and lives today, Lord. We pray that people would leave here touched and changed by you.
- In Jesus' name, amen. So I'm not Sean, but I did stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night. But no one knows that reference. All right, that's fine.
- So for those of you that don't know, and I haven't talked a lot about this yet, but I've recently started writing for a video game criticism site. And so criticism in the sense of, like, a movie critic or an art critic.
- [ 1 : 04 ]     And I feel like this is just my subliminal self-justification for wasting all the hours I did as a kid playing video games. Now I'm doing something useful with it. So it's like, I feel better now. No, seriously, it's part of a Christian ministry that's specifically targeted towards gamers.
- And I'd love to talk to you about it at some point, but that's not what I'm talking about this for right now. What I'm talking about it for is that in doing this, I've learned a lot about art and entertainment criticism.
- You kind of read critics. You know, you go and you look at Rotten Tomatoes or Metacritic, and you look at the movie reviews, and you say whether it's good or not. Do I want to go see this? And kind of the picture you have of this is, you know, someone sits down and watches a movie or looks at a piece of art and says, okay, this, you know, they put it against this, like, invisible framework of this is what the perfect movie or art piece is.
- And, okay, so this is good, and this is bad, and this is what I like about it, and this is what I don't, and that's it. And that's kind of the impression I had about art criticism going into it. And as I've done it and as I've read more about it, I've learned that that's absolutely not the case.
- The role of the critic is not to sit there and just judge the art, and the role of the art is not just to be judged. Actually, one of the most famous critics of our time, A.O. Scott, who writes for the New York Times and has given enough leeway, he's famous enough that he actually said that the Avengers movie was awful, which I disagree with.
- [ 2 : 23 ]     And then he got into a fight with Samuel L. Jackson about why it was awful, and he just, so he, and paper didn't fire him, so he's definitely in an empowered position. He's one of the top critics of our time and most respected.
- And what he says about criticism is this. You must become the person who is willing to change your life based on the exhortations of art. You must become the person who is willing to change your life based on the exhortations of art.

And he talks about it, that the role of the critic is not to sit there necessarily and say, I like this, I don't like this, that's it. The role of the critic is to sit there and receive what the art is saying. And almost, in a sense, the art's role is to judge the critic first because a person has invested their time and their life into that, and then the critic stands and sees and witnesses to what good things or what bad things that art has.

And so this, the position that we have before Jesus and the position that sometimes we think we have before Jesus is kind of similar. And that's, I think we're talking about the role that we have and the role that Jesus has in this passage a lot.

And John the Baptist and John the author of this gospel discuss that role that we have and the role that Jesus has. I think the point of this passage is that our role in life is to believe in Jesus and to witness to his glorious role.

[ 3 : 44 ] And so our role in life is to believe in Jesus and witness to his glorious role. And so I've picked some peculiar words in this phrase that we don't usually use. I just roll, witness, and glorious.

And I'm going to discuss why I've picked those words specifically because I think they describe well what's going on in this passage. So at the beginning of the passage we see John the Baptist's role. his role in all of this is to witness to Jesus.

And that's kind of what the first part of this passage is about. And so looking at verse 22, verse 22 through 24 set the context for this. It says, After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside and he remained there with them and was baptizing.

And John the Baptist was also baptizing Anon near Selim because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized for John had not yet been put in prison. And so in the discussion here we see Jesus is kind of moving out of the city area where he was talking with Nicodemus previously.

He's moving out to a more rural area where there's water and space to baptize. And the interesting point is that it says John has not yet been thrown in prison. And we learn from the other Gospels, particularly Mark, that Jesus is, the bulk of Jesus' ministry started after John got thrown in prison.

[ 5 : 00 ] So we're kind of in a transitory period here. John was sent, John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the Lord, to get people ready for Jesus to come. And so Jesus has come and he's not quite into full gear ministry yet.

And so there's sort of this transition going on where John is starting to step down and Jesus is coming and stepping up into his full ministry. And so that's important as we look at this passage, just seeing, just the phrase in John 2 is that Jesus says, my time has not yet come, right before he changes the water into wine, he kind of gives some kick back there before he does that miracle.

And he's just kind of indicating, no, I'm not, my full ministry isn't quite here yet. I'm still being prepared. And so with that context, we see in verse 25, a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

And so the rest of the passage is about John baptizing versus Jesus baptizing, but this is apparently where the discussion came from. We don't know what the debate's over. It's probably don't know because it's not that, it's not relevant to the story in the sense that we don't need to know exactly what they were talking about, but it got John's disciples fired up.

They were debating with a Jew, you know, Jewish baptism was very different than what John was doing. Jewish baptism was often for ritual purification and would happen multiple times. And John was doing it as for repentance, saying, you know, turn from your sins and believe.

[ 6 : 28 ] And he was doing it one time for people. So regardless of what that discussion was, I picture John's disciples coming back, a little fired up from that. Maybe the Jew took a jab at him and said, hey, you know, you've been baptizing but this Jesus guy, you know, he's been baptizing more people all of a sudden.

What's going on there? And so they come back and, you know, it says in verse 26, they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he's baptizing and all are going to him.

And this is actually a strong statement and I think we can glaze over it a little bit, but it's kind of dramatic and resentful. The word look is kind of like lo and behold or like we don't say that anymore.

It might be like yelling, hey, what's the deal? You know, look, he's baptizing and all are going to him. And I think it's clear that these are resentful words and not just a statement because not everyone is going to Jesus to be baptized yet.

Clearly John is still baptizing in this passage. Some people are going to John. Probably more people are going to Jesus at this point. And so there's some sort of resentfulness of, man, we've been doing this for a while, you know, baptizing people and now Jesus is getting the baptisms.

[ 7 : 34 ] What's the deal with this? It feels kind of pouty like the kid that's like, my friend got the ice cream. Why don't I get the ice cream? Or, you know, my friend got to stay up late. Why don't I get to stay up late? It feels kind of unfair.

That's what they're saying. I think maybe something that those of us that are older can relate with is that it's kind of like a group project for school or when you're part of like a volunteer board for something.

And you all have this one thing to accomplish. And there's that one person that really isn't doing that much or pulling their weight. And so somebody else has to pull their weight for them. And if you've never experienced this before, you might be that person that's not pulling your weight.

You never know. And so, you know, at the end of it, everyone probably gets the same grade or the thing's accomplished and someone is kind of, it feels like someone's freeloading along and you've done most of the work.

But that's, I think, an even closer parallel maybe from something, a story that I think of from my life is that I did a Shakespeare scene contest for a while because I was a nerd and still am.

[ 8 : 32 ] And so what we would do is we would do one scene from Shakespeare and act about five minutes of it and prep for it and then there was a competition. And so one of the guys that I did the scene with every single year would not memorize his lines until the day of the competition.

And so, like, we would all have them memorized, like, you know, a few weeks before and be practicing and he'd be pulling out his lines like, oh, shoot, what was I supposed to say again? And it would really, you know, it'd break the flow of practice or whatever. It doesn't feel as natural at that point.

But when the day of the competition would come, not only would he have his lines memorized, but he was the best actor on stage every single time. And he would pull out things that would surprise us. He would pull out things that would surprise me.

I'm like, oh, I never thought about that that way before. Now I was doing it this way. And so that was, like, I think that's part of the aggravation of, like, oh, I've been prepping for this. I've been working for this. And then this other guy just comes and gets all the glory for it.

And I think that's what they're saying. You know, look, we've been doing this for a while and now Jesus just, you know, gets to baptize people. And John, so John answers them. He really confronts him on this. And he starts out by saying in verse 27, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

[ 9 : 37 ] And so John just kind of sets the framework here. He's like, look, guys, the reason that we even have this ministry is because God gave it to us in the first place. And so God has empowered us to do what we're doing.

This is a humble answer and an affirmation of God's greatness. And generally it's true. You know, we receive what we get from heaven. And for them to sit there and say, you know, I really want to be doing what Jesus is doing at this point.

I don't want to be fulfilling this role of preparing the way for Jesus. Jesus, they're basically starting to take this place of God there and say, you know, I get to decide what's important and what's not. And so John's kind of kicking it back a notch and saying, look, we get this straight from God what we're doing here.

And then in verse 28, he says, you yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. And this is kind of the, I think he's bringing out a little bit of irony in their statement.

He's like, look, you just said that I bear witness to Jesus. You know, you witness to the fact that I witness to Jesus. This is the whole point that I'm here. It's like, guys, this was the goal.

[ 10 : 43 ] Like, I was not sent to be Christ, but I was sent to prepare the way for him. It's like, this is exactly what we're expecting to happen. We're expecting more people to go to Jesus. And something that we'll keep looking at here is that John is content with his role as a witness.

He's content not being the one that gets the glory and the attention and the affirmation, but directing that towards Jesus. And I think that this is a good time to talk about what it means to be a witness.

And I think that in verse 31 what we'll look at later, a little bit later, it says that Jesus, talking about Jesus as a witness, it says, Jesus testifies to what he has seen and heard.

And I think that's a good definition of a witness. Someone who tells what they have seen and heard about something. And the word witness or testimony or testify or witnessing is used throughout John's gospel a lot.

And a great example of it being used is actually at the end of the gospel when John, the writer, kind of signs the book and says, you know, this is the disciple in verse, it's chapter 21, verse 24.

[ 11 : 50 ] John says, this is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things, the book, and we know that his testimony is true. So John says, you know, this whole book, everything we've heard about Jesus so far and everything we're going to hear throughout this series is a witness to Jesus.

It's John telling what he's seen and heard about Jesus. And in this case, because, you know, a regular witness, we think of like a courtroom or something like that, it could be for good or for worse.

But in the case of Jesus, because he's God and because he's perfect, the witness to Jesus is always to his greatness and how good that he is. And so I think an example of that that makes sense in our time and also made sense in John's time because he brings it up next is the idea of kind of a best man in a wedding.

And, you know, I've been part of a few bridal parties and one of the aspects of that is, you know, they're not the people standing up front, they're the people to the side and they're dressed in coordinated clothing and they all face towards the bride and groom.

And the whole point of them being there is to, you know, make the wedding look better basically, to be a witness to the bride and groom. And even, you know, the best man and the maid of honor get to share a statement witnessing to their appreciation for the bride and for the groom.

[13:04] And so John brings it up in verse 29, he says, the one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

And I think the friend who attends here, so this is like our equivalent of the best man, but the best man back then did a lot of stuff. He was like the best man and the maid of honor and like the parents and all together because he was the one that actually organized and coordinated the wedding.

So a lot of roles fell onto him. And so, you know, his joy, you know, when it says, when he hears the, when he hears great, when he rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice, it's kind of a semblance of the end of the wedding.

The wedding has gone well. Maybe that's the, you know, I pronounce you husband and wife equivalent today. He rejoices when that's, when that is completed. And John says, therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

And in the illustration he's looking at here, John is the friend of the bridegroom, the best man. And Jesus is the groom. And he's saying, my joy is complete because Jesus has come.

[14:07] And the bride in this example is the people of God that he's come back for. And this is something that's used a lot through the Old Testament, just a symbol of how Jesus comes to save his people. He's like a groom coming back to claim his bride.

And one of the passages that he might be thinking of or referencing here is Isaiah 62, four through five. And there it says, you shall no more be termed forsaken and your land shall no more be termed desolate.

But you shall be called, my delight is in her and your land married. For the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you.

And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. And so John's saying, this is it. Israel, the people of God, the Jews have been waiting for God to come back and rescue them from, in this case, their mindset was, you know, Roman rule, that Israel wasn't its own independent nation.

It was subjugated to Rome. They didn't have freedom to practice their religion necessarily in the way that they wanted to. And John's explicitly saying, you know, this is God coming back in Jesus.

[15:20] He's coming back for his people to rescue them. And so he kind of concludes this whole section by saying, you know, he must increase, talking about Jesus, but I must decrease.

And so John, in this, fully realizes that his role is not to make himself look good, but to make Jesus look great. And our role is not directly John's.

Like, we're not specifically called, we're not around in the time of the first coming of Jesus here. We're not specifically called to go out into the desert and eat locusts and baptize people in water like that. But our role is very similar though.

It's to believe in Jesus and to witness to his goodness. And so I think that intellectually that settles well, but when it comes down to it, that we enjoy getting credit for things and we enjoy making ourselves look good.

And I think the way that we phrase this in America often is kind of like the American dream, like finding success. And I'm not against many aspects of the American dream, like the hard work is good.

[ 16 : 22 ] Getting rewarded for hard work I think is good and even biblical from what we see. But there's an aspect to the American dream that it's all about making myself look great. And so often when we talk about things that people aspire to, it's to start up and succeed in your own business or to own your own cool house or a better car or better, whatever it might be.

It might be something like selling your own product, like your own artwork. Having the corporate ladder climb, the whole goal of that is to be in charge of more people so more people have to listen to us.

for us to be respected by others for fitness or intelligence or hard work or charisma or whatever it might be. And I think that if our role in life is purely to witness to how good we are, to see and hear how awesome I am, we are going to be disappointed.

I particularly will be disappointed. We're going to live restless lives because we don't always succeed and we will never succeed enough. We will never find enough satisfaction in seeking our own greatness.

You know, what's interesting is that there is a particular joy in making somebody else look good, though, that is unique and different than trying to make ourselves look good. And actually, the example of my friend that I acted with, maybe, you know, I would get frustrated sometimes with him, but when it would come to acting day, the reason we were good, whoever was working with him, was because he was good.

[ 17 : 53 ] And any success that we enjoyed there was because we helped him look good in that instance and played off of him and saw his new ideas and worked with him. And so that became, it went from, like, oh, he doesn't have his lines memorized to I'm really hyped for the day of the play when he's going to be totally on fire and we're going to see some great things.

And it was, like, a legitimate contest. Like, actual people who were trying to act professionally would participate in it. And we, who were just doing it for fun, still somehow managed to swing a couple honorable awards at different points.

And I honestly think it was because he was so good. And so there was that excitement of seeing that. And so, you know, if our role is to witness to our own greatness, we're never going to be satisfied enough.

But, if our role is to witness to Jesus' greatness and show how great he is, then I think we can be satisfied because Jesus has perfectly fulfilled his role.

And that's what John talks about in, John, the author, steps back and says basically, you know, so John the Baptist says, you know, he must increase, I must decrease. And so John the author kind of takes an aside here in the next few verses and says, why is Jesus worthy of being witness to?

[ 19 : 02 ] Why do we witness to him? What is the role that he's completed and fulfilled? So, in verse 31, we kind of, there's two Johns here, so I try to be clear, but, you know, switch back to John the author's writing now, commenting on the story.

He says, he who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

And so the first reason that Jesus is worthy of increasing and the first reason that he is great and has fulfilled his role is that he is the one from above. And this actually goes back to verse 27, I think it is, where John says, you know, we don't receive anything unless it comes from heaven.

Well, Jesus is the one in heaven who comes from above and he is the one giving out the good things and giving out authority and making these decisions. He is great. And so, when it says, it's a play on words there of the above and the above, you know, he who is from above, like heaven, spatially, is above everyone in authority.

And so, I use the word glorious kind of to describe this because, you know, above doesn't quite ring in our heads the same way it does of what the scripture is getting across here.

[ 20 : 19 ] Glorious in the sense of like weightiness that God, God's greatness, that he's the one that gives authority and gifts and has authority over all things and that those who are on the earth talking about us, probably specifically talking about John the Baptist here.

It says, you know, they belong to the earth and speak in an earthly way. I don't think that, I don't think this is about people being bad. I think this is just about the fact that God is so different from man and, you know, John the Baptist fulfills the role of an earthly man.

He speaks of Christ and Jesus speaks is something far greater. And so, in verse 32 and 33 he continues, says, he bears witness to what he has seen and heard, talking about Jesus, yet no one receives his testimony but whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

And so, we testify to what we have seen and heard of Jesus and John testified to what he had seen and heard of Jesus and what does Jesus witness to? And the answer seems to be that Jesus witnesses to actually seeing God himself, God the Father in heaven and testifies to that.

And to us, I think that we can kind of just slip over that and slip past that pretty easily and not think about it too hard. But in the context of Jesus' time, particularly in the Old Testament, God is often portrayed as unapproachably holy, that to be near him is to risk death.

[ 21 : 46 ] There's a story in 2 Samuel of King David goes back and claims the ark from an opposing nation. The ark is where God's presence presided and what represented God's presence in Israel.

And so they loaded it onto an oxen cart the right way using some poles that slide into the side of it. And so the ox are kind of lumbering back towards Israel and they hit a bump in the road and the ark begins to tip.

So the presence of God is about to fall into the mud, right, symbolically here. And so the guy who's next to it reaches out and holds it up to stop it from falling and he's struck dead on the spot just for touching it.

And I think to us, we're like, dude, what's the deal? Like, why is he dead? And it feels to us maybe malicious or arbitrary up front that something like that would happen.

And I think of it as a comparison is like, if a boulder falls on me, it's not the boulder's choice whether to squish me or not necessarily at that point. You know, it's not like the boulder's saying, oh, I'm going to hold back at this point.

[ 22 : 45 ] No, the weight of the boulder would just crush me entirely. And I think that God, one, he is so great and we are so frail that experiencing him in that direct way is just, it's overwhelming.

And two, God has made the choice to reveal himself directly to us in Jesus in a way that we can handle and in a way that is full and honest and true. And I think that's why it says, whoever receives his testimony witnesses God's truth firsthand now.

And it says, like, they set their seal to this, that God is true. It's like an absolute confirmation, like signing your name to a document. And we say it that way because we have now seen and heard God through Jesus.

And so we're able to confirm that God is true through that. Verse 34, for he whom God has sent utters the words of God for he gives the spirit without measure. And so the words of God here kind of are the truth of God that we're hearing.

It's why we value the scripture here. It's why the, you know, week after week Sean comes up here and teaches us from the word. Um, it's why we don't, he doesn't come up necessarily and share his good opinions.

[ 23 : 55 ] That's not the main focus. It's not, we don't have a group discussion time during this time. I think all those things are really good. Um, but the main focus of the worship of God is to hear from his word specifically because this reveals his truth.

Um, and then it also says, you know, for he gives the spirit without measure. Um, and it's, it's cool how it's not at this point, it's like, yes, we need God's word, but we also need his spirit to understand and proclaim his word.

And in this instance, we, all Christians, have the spirit and are filled with the spirit, um, and can experience fillings with the spirit. Uh, but in this case, it's as Jesus has received the spirit without measure.

This is past what the prophets knew. This is past what we know. This is an unlimited, just outpouring of the spirit, just a large overflow. Um, and that, that empowering of the spirit worked with Jesus as he proclaimed the word to teach God's truth.

And I think that that's why we as a church, you know, we spend time praying together in the service. We have a Friday night prayer time because we realize we need the spirit. We need to pray to God to give more of the spirit to, to empower us.

[ 24 : 58 ] Um, and in this verse, you know, we've been talking about God's greatness, his truth, uh, his power, his majesty. And then this next verse, um, just hits home. It really, it really stops us.

It says, the father loves the son and has given all things into his hand. Um, and it just, it hits that this is not just, you know, God is great, um, he's powerful, but he's all, he's loving.

Um, he's choosing to, to love his people. In this instance, it says, the father loves the son. Um, and we as redeemed people, we as, as Christians, experience that love that the father shares with the son, a love that, that gives all things to the son generously.

Um, and so we're brought into that love through Jesus. And so, verse 36 kind of, kind of culminates the entire passage, uh, kind of hits the, the point that our, you know, our role in life is to believe in Jesus and witness to his glorious role.

In verse 36, it says, whoever believes in the son has eternal life, and whoever does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. So, this is a strong contrast here at the end.

[ 26 : 07 ] Um, those that believe have eternal life. And I think this is referencing back to that overflow of the love between the father and the son. And this is something that we have right now. We usually talk about, just in Christianese, eternal life usually references, oh, well, when I die, I'll go to spend eternity with God.

Um, but it says, you know, whoever believes in the son has eternal life right now, is experiencing the love of the father, um, is empowered by God and by the spirit.

Um, and it's a strong contrast to this, you know, those that do not, those who don't obey, um, and I think belief and obey are pretty similar here and I'll look at that in a second. Uh, it's not even that they won't have eternal life, they won't even see life and the wrath of God remains upon them.

Um, and so this, this jostles a little bit against our cultural sensibility of, you know, in our culture, tolerance and inclusivity are very big virtues. Uh, you know, I'll do my thing, you do your thing as long as we don't hurt each other.

Um, it's kind of the, the go-to. And so to hear something very strong like this, to hear like, you know, you believe in Jesus, get this, don't believe in Jesus, receive this. Um, and I think that, uh, what I wrestle through with this is a couple things.



[ 27 : 15 ] Um, is that we are all, we like to pretend that we're tolerant and inclusive but we are all exclusive to a point. Um, we all, if you, I don't want to start anything but if you listen to the rhetoric that comes up around this election season or any election season, um, there is an exclusivity to the rhetoric that the person who is voting for not your candidate is obviously wrong and in the wrong and doing a wrong thing and that's very exclusive language that is used in that sense.

Um, every religion and even non-religious people are exclusive to a sense. They'll say, okay, well, you know, it's okay if you believe these things but, you know, if you're an atheist or agnostic, you're going to say, no, Jesus is not God.

You know, he might have been a real person but he wasn't God. You're exclusive to that. That idea is exclusive outside of you. Um, you know, if you're a Muslim you would claim similarly, you know, Jesus is not God because Allah is God and Allah is one.

Um, and so, there are these hard exclusivities within everyone's belief system, within what everybody thinks. And so, the question is not so much, um, who is inclusive because no one truly is.

The question is, who is most gracious? Who handles the exclusivity best? Uh, as you look and consider. So, um, if you're not a Christian here today or you're not sure what you think about faith or you're not sure where you are, um, I would encourage you to think about that.

[ 28 : 30 ] Just the, the, everyone has exclusivity to a point. Um, and you want to look and see who handles that best, who handles it most graciously. Um, and for me, uh, I have come to the conclusion that it's, it's Christianity, um, and that God leaves open the door for anyone to, to believe in him, um, and to experience that eternal life.

Uh, and I think also, too, that, you know, from the perspective of Christianity, if, if God is true, like what he says is right, and God is truly God, he is in charge of everything and the greatest being, um, then it makes sense that worship should be directed towards him alone, uh, that eternal life comes through him alone.

Um, and so the call to belief here that we look at is not, you know, we kind of talk about, oh, okay, just believe, we use the phrase believe in Jesus sometimes and you'll be saved. And it's kind of like, well, what does that mean?

Um, and I think it's an affirmation of everything we've heard about Jesus from this passage. You know, when you, when you, we say we believe in Jesus, we say we believe that he has authority over everything, um, which often means that we relinquish our control and our ideas of how things should be.

Uh, you know, and we believe in Jesus that he speaks the truth, which means that he might confront opinions or thoughts that I have that feel comfortable to me, but I read in the scripture that they're not true. Um, and so I have to, to submit to that.

[ 29 : 47 ] Um, we, believing in Jesus says, you know, our role is to proclaim his greatness, uh, not our own. And so there are times that when I would seek for my own greatness that I'm called to instead step aside, um, and not do that and, and point people to Jesus.

Um, and so do hear, you know, this is, do hear what Jesus is offering to those who believe in him. Um, it's honestly, I think one of the biggest things from this passage is the ability to have satisfaction in any circumstance, um, when we make our lives about making Jesus great.

Um, and I think that, uh, I think a good explanation of this that comes to my mind is that everyone, we talk about like existential crises, like a midlife crisis where someone goes and, you know, they decide, oh, what have I been doing with my life?

This is miserable. And so, you know, they, you know, in the dramatic example, they change their career path and they get a divorce and they buy a new fancy car or whatever it might be and they move to the Bahamas and, you know, so I don't, I, I'm sure there are people out there that take dramatic steps like that.

I don't know too many people that have. Um, but I think that we all have, have existential crises like this and we handle it different ways. You know, when you're younger, if you move schools or if you move from one area to another or you lose some friends for some reason, the question becomes, you know, will I ever have as good of friends as I had before?

[ 31 : 06 ] Will I ever have that experience that I was having before? Um, it can really hurt when that happens. You know, if you're older than me and worked, you know, a longer career or raised a family or in the process of raising a family, um, you might sit there and say, you know, I'm, you just stop and like, you know, when I was Steve's age, um, I thought things were going to turn out differently.

I don't know how to say this politely. I'm always bad with this. I thought things were going to turn out differently. I had these pictures of, in my mind, but, you know, I spent most of my life changing diapers or working really hard to provide for my family and, you know, now I'm, now I'm sitting here and where's the time gone?

Um, you know, if you're my age and you're a millennial, then you're always restless and having crises, um, because that's our generation. Um, and I will, I will freely admit, you know, I spent seven years doing, studying for full-time ministry.

Um, at two or three different points, I thought I was going to go do full-time ministry and work with youth at a camp or something like that. Um, and I now find myself in Cambridge. Uh, I don't, never liked the city growing up.

Um, working for a technology company, which is something I've never studied for before. Um, and part of a church plant, which is something I just did not expect at all. Um, and so I definitely have those moments where I sit there and I'm like, God, what are you doing?

[ 32 : 17 ] Like, this is not what I was, this is not what I visualized at all. Um, and I think that I'm not, I think all those experiences are legitimate to some point. Like, I'm not here to critique you if you're going through something like that. I'd rather talk with you about it and hear.

Um, but, you know, in my case particularly, my satisfaction when I worry about that is, is, um, is this about what I want?

Am I picturing my own greatness? This is about reaching my goals specifically. And the thing about making Christ great, about seeing him increase and me decrease, that can happen at any point in life. It does not matter where you are.

It does not matter whether your personal goals have been achieved. Uh, it doesn't matter how you're feeling at that point that making Christ great can happen wherever you are. Um, so let me pray for us in closing.

Um, Lord, I thank you, um, that making you great is the greatest joy we can have.

[ 33 : 17 ] Lord, I pray that our joy would be complete as John the Baptist's joy was complete, uh, in seeing you exalted and, in telling others about you and living our lives in such a way that they represent you well, Lord.

Um, Lord, I pray as we continue the service, as we go into a time of corporate prayer and of communion, Lord, Lord, I pray that you would truly commune with us, Lord, I pray that you would hear our prayers, uh, and I pray that your spirit would be here with us.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Thank you.