

Leadership Seminar

(hosting Shane Willard)
Mike Connell

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Leadership Seminar (Shane Willard 2008)

[Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah \(1 of 6\) \(Shane Willard\)](#) Pictures from Hebrew hieroglyphics are used, like a comic strip, to illuminate the word. Tefillah (Prayer) is to turn the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden. Teshuvah (Repentance) is to change your thinking. Tzedakah is that Faith leads to Righteousness revealed - to be generous. The desire of your heart opens the door to humility.

[Being a Peacemaker \(2 of 6\) \(Shane Willard\)](#) This story is about Peacemakers & Escalation...Our hero of the faith was a rebellious, spoilt brat, who wanted his own way, in every single way. This was a man that was sleeping with prostitutes on his wedding night, because he got depressed, because his best man stole his wife.

From what started out as a joke no-one understood, a fascinating cycle of violence ensues, based on: because you did this, I now have a right to do that. I merely did to them, what they did to me. This way of living will always bring death.

[Demonstrating God's Power \(3 of 6\) \(Shane Willard\)](#) Remarkable similarities are found between the Corinthian Gods of Mithra, Adonis, Addis, Horus, and the Gospel story of Jesus Christ. Paul's strategy changed in Corinth, instead of making fine-sounding arguments that Jesus was the Christ, as he did with the Jews, he demonstrated what

Jesus' life looked like, by living it out. That gave him the credibility to announce that the kingdom of God was at hand. Cookie-cutter evangelism doesn't work. Demonstrating the Power of God, within the Disposition of Messiah, gives us the Credibility to speak life into any situation.

[Being a Good Neighbor \(4 of 6\) \(Shane Willard\)](#) Luke 12:13 is the only time that Jesus' actually proclaims: God is going to kill you. It's not any of the sins you would think. It's not adultery, fornication, burning your children in fire, idolatry. Its greed! Jesus is not impressed by what kind of car you drive, house you live in, or anything you possess; but with how much compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding-in-love, character is present in your homes.

[Form versus Function \(5 of 6\) \(Shane Willard\)](#) Greek people, people with white skin that come from Europe, and they find their origins in a really big, powerful church in Europe, that has big buildings with apostles names named after them - we see form. We always see form. We were trained to see form, we think in form, everything about us is form. Hebrew people see function. To study our Bible more effectively, we should be people who are training ourself to see function, not form.

[Worries of this Life, Deceitfulness of Wealth \(6 of 6\) \(Shane Willard\)](#) Jesus says: the worries of this life will keep the word of God from taking root in your life. It's something that chokes your life out. The other one is the deceitfulness of wealth, which is a lie that says: if I had this I would be happy. Do you have one day in seven, that is unlike any other? If you do, how is it different? Who are the most important people to you? What are you called to be? Is that getting your attention first?

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Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah (1 of 6)

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Pictures from Hebrew hieroglyphics are used, like a comic strip, to illuminate the word. Tefillah (Prayer) is to turn the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden. Teshuvah (Repentance) is to change your thinking. Tzedakah is that Faith leads to

Righteousness revealed - to be generous. The desire of your heart opens the door to humility.

I want to start out tonight by talking about faith. Of all the ethnic groups of people in the world, and all the different types of cultures and races and stuff, I have a rule. I can only make fun of those that I am... So I can make of white people okay - because I'm white.

We have a certain way. If I was to take a survey of people who come from Europe; and we're talking about good-hearted people, on their way to heaven, saved as saved can be. If I was to ask them: why, if you died today, would you go to heaven? Some 90% would give me the same answer: I would go to heaven; because I believe in Jesus.

Now there's a problem with that, isn't there? Is there anybody in hell, who believes in Jesus? Yeah, there are lots of people in hell, who believe in Jesus - particularly demons! I won't say people, because it's not my place to put people there, but yeah, we'll say: demons. There are lots of demons in hell, who believe in Jesus; and they don't just believe in Jesus - they actually are scared to death of Him! They actually have a certain respect for who He is, and yet they still find themselves in hell.

So obviously then, a 'belief in Jesus' is not enough to save us eternally. We're talking about salvation here. It's got to be Faith; so I met with my mentor, and we started fleshing this thing out about faith, and I want to show you what faith means.

Now there are three steps to faith, in a Hebrew concept, from a rabbi. The first step is: Tefillah; the second step is: Teshuvah, and the third step is: Tzedakah. So if you asked a First Century Hebrew teacher, what it means to have faith, they would've said: Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah. Doesn't it have kind of a da-da-da da-da-da da-da-da; has this sort of ring to it.

So when Paul makes statements like: "for by grace you've been saved, through faith and that not of yourself, this is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast". In his mind, as a First Century rabbi, he'd be thinking: Tefillah; Teshuvah; Tzedakah.

Now the Hebrew language, originally, was pictures (hieroglyphics). So every Hebrew letter is a picture; so a word is like a cartoon strip. It makes sense doesn't it; because where did the nation of Israel come from? Egypt right! They were a group of people that started out as a family, and ends up in a place in Egypt; they grow and grow and grow and grow and grow. So it stands to reason, that as they develop their own way of thinking, that they would have had a language similar to the Egyptians, which was hieroglyphics.

So the Hebrew language originally was pictures, all the way up to Babylon. If you look at the history of the Hebrew people, they were in slavery to Egypt for 430 years; and then a guy named Moses comes in, and he rescues them out of that slavery. Then they were out of slavery for 430 years; and then they get re-enslaved. We're going to talk about that later this week, why they got re-enslaved.

Part of the reason was because this group of people who were slaves, and God freed them from that, eventually started enslaving people again. Solomon had forced labor building the temple of God! So this God, who hates slavery so much that He got this whole group of people out of it - the very group of people that He got out of slavery into freedom, they turned around and enslaved people.

So then they get enslaved into Babylon. From the slavery in Babylon to the time of Jesus was exactly 430 years; so to the Hebrew people, the Hebrew people were waiting on a new Moses, to come and kind of 'save the day'. So when Jesus comes along the scene, the writers and people are proclaiming things like: "peace on earth, and good will to all men". In other words, what they were saying was: Caesar is not the answer, this guy is. This guy is. It was all a political thing.

So anyway, back to this group of people in Egypt. They developed this language in pictures, so every Hebrew letter is a picture. Every Hebrew word then is a comic strip. For example, the Hebrew word for inequity, is the word Avon. Yes, all the old school Pentecostal say Amen? Even the word for make-up is sin - I told you Mildred, I told ya!

Now in Hebrew, the 'o' does not exist; we just put the 'o' in English, so you know how to pronounce it. In Hebrew it's just: A, V and N; or: Alef; Vav; and Noon. Now the picture of A is an eye; the picture of Vav was a hook; and Noon was fish that were multiplying. So it's kind of like one fish becomes two, becomes four, becomes eight - like it looks like that.

By the way, can you imagine being a scribe between Moses and David? Like all the psalms would have been written like this!

So when a Hebrew person read: 'Inequity', they would see this word: Eye + Hook + Fish-Multiplying. So when a Hebrew person read 'Inequity', what they read was: "whatever your eye hooks-to, multiplies".

If you've ever done premarital counseling, you know this to be true; because two people come, and they're in love, and their eye is hooked to all the good things. I've had them sit in my office, and I'm saying: "are you sure that you want to do this"? "Yes". I'm like: "sir, have you seen the way she acts, when she doesn't get her way"? He's like: "oh yeah, but it'll be okay, we're in loove"!

How many of you know, like four months into that, it's like a disaster right; because your eye - it's not because anything's changed. It's just because the focus of your eye has changed to something different. The focus of your eye has changed.

How many of you have ever been guilty of: focusing on everything you don't have; instead of being thankful for what you do? Whatever your eye hooks to, multiplies. Has anybody, besides me, ever been guilty of wanting something really, really bad; to the point where we thought we'd die without it; and then we get it, and it's not what we thought it was? That's what this is. Its inequity.

I'm just using this as an example of their pictures; but this should give us a revelation on grace; and that is, that there's three levels to sin in the Hebrew culture. I always say 'levels', but that makes it sound like one's worse than the other, so we'll say 'stages'.

Stage one is: Inequity; and that's when your eye hooks to something, and it starts multiplying. So let's say, I want this pen. My eye hooks to this pen; and my need for it on the inside starts to grow. Even if I look over here, my eye's still drawn to this pen. Any guy here ever been on a car lot, and your eye gets drawn to the V8 - even though petrol's \$1.85 a litre! Your eye gets drawn to the V8, because you'll be more of a man if you have the V8. Chicks dig the V8; and so the eye gets hooked to it.

Now at some point in that journey of my eye hooking to this, it starts multiplying. It creates something that the Bible calls a lust; and once that lust is in us, and we are enticed by it - that's when the Bible says we sin.

The Bible says: a person sins when he's drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. So my eye hooks to it, it creates a lust, and now I'm having a lust for this pen. I really want it. I need it. I have to have it in my life. I might die without that pen.

Come on, this is about all of us, isn't it? I mean it might not be a pen, but it could be something else; and so that's sin. That's level two - so you've got Inequity; and then you've got Sin.

The third stage is: Transgression, when I actually take the pen. It's when I actually do something. So in the Old Testament, could you prosecute somebody for Inequity? Could you prosecute somebody for having inequity in their heart? Absolutely not! Why? Because you didn't know it was there. How would you know?

Could you prosecute somebody for sin? No, because you don't know it's there. However, you could prosecute somebody for transgression; because if you had two or three witnesses of somebody transgressing the law, that's when you could prosecute them.

So Jesus comes along, and He starts blowing people away. He starts saying things like: you have heard it said: "don't murder". Now is murder: Inequity; a Sin; or a Transgression? It's a transgression.

He said: "you've heard it said: don't commit murder; but I say to you: don't hate" - so He starts bringing the standard back to Inequity.

You've heard it said: "don't commit adultery"; but I say to you: "don't lust". Wow! So He starts bringing it back to Inequity, which should give us a revelation of grace, because the Bible says: we all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the Avon of us all (the inequity of us all).

In other words: Jesus doesn't just forgive you for what you've done; He forgives you all the way back to where your eye hooked to it. That's grace.

So you've got this concept of Faith: Tefillah; Teshuvah; Tzedakah. Tefillah, that's Prayer; and Teshuvah is Repentance. I'm going to define Tzedakah with the word itself, in just a moment.

Can anybody tell me: when was the first mention of the idea of prayer, in the whole Bible? Here is just basic Hebrew from Hermeneutic 101: It's called the Law of Firsts - so what's true the first mention, is true of every other part of it in the Bible. What's true of the firstborn is true of the whole family; what's true of the first fruit, is true of the whole crop; what's true of the first word, is true of the whole book; what's true of the first letter, is true of the whole word, okay?

For instance: Jesus came along by the fig tree, and He didn't see any fruit; He only saw fig leaves. Well, one of the first things you'd do, as a Hebrew Hermeneutic, is you would say: where's the first mention of fig leaves in the Bible? It's of course, all the way back in the Garden of Eden - so you can go look at those kinds of things.

So I started asking questions like: when is the first mention of Prayer in the whole Bible, and its much later than you would think. It's actually in Genesis 4:26; and it says this: "Finally the sons of Enosh called upon the name of the Lord".

What the rabbi said about that, was that it took that many generations for people to overcome the shame of Adam and Eve, and to begin to address God again. So if you go look up that word 'called', this idea of prayer, this is what you see. You've got three pictures.

You've got three heads; three letters, three heads. First letter is the front of the head; second letter is the back of a head; and the third letter is an ox head, going into a yoke. This was the Hebrew idea of prayer, as found in Genesis 4. That word morphed into the word Tefillah; so you've got front of the head, you've got back of the head, and then you have an ox head going into a yoke. So that tells you a comic strip

What a Hebrew person sees is this (follow the pictures): that prayer is a "turning of the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden".

Let's say it this way: prayer is being God-conscious. Prayer is being conscious of God, instead of conscious of myself. Prayer is any time I take my focus off of me, and put it onto Him.

In other words, the Hebrew idea of prayer had very little to do with words. As a matter of fact, Jesus was against long babbling prayers. Jesus said: when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the Pentecostals do, for they think they'll be heard because of their many words.

The longest prayer Jesus ever prayed takes like, 25 seconds to read; so it would have taken Him less to say it - yet Jesus could go off and pray for an hour. What was He doing for an hour? How could you pray for an hour, and not say anything? What was He doing? What would you do for an hour?

You would turn your head, in order to face the one, who could bear the burden; and then after that hour, where you were completely conscious of God, only then would you speak out loud, what the spirit of God had put on your heart to do. That takes a very short amount of time. We do it backwards. We speak, until we feel God. They would feel God, and then speak out of that - two totally different things. It's a turning of the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden.

Now Teshuvah/Repentance: it could mean a couple of things. It could mean 'to change your mind', or 'to change your thinking'. It also was an 'exile' term. These were a group of people who were used to being enslaved by people; and the prophets would come to them, and they would say things like: Return - Teshuvah, Teshuvah, Teshuvah. In other words, there's a kingdom that's available to you, that has nothing to do with this. You can return to that.

So let's put it in context. Tefillah is: to turn the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden. Tefillah is: when I step out of myself, and I begin to become aware of the Mighty One who's with me, the Mighty One who's in me. Tefillah is when I become totally aware of God, and He and only Him, the Mighty One, the creator of the entire universe, every bit of Him is within me. The kingdom is not this way, or that; or up and down; the kingdom of God is the last place we look, which is inside us. That is prayer.

Repentance is: once I'm facing the one who can bear the burden, then I position myself to change my thinking, to how He thinks - which is a bigger shift than we would think.

We all like the 'what would Jesus do' bracelets. We love that! We love the what 'would Jesus do bracelets', until someone slaps us on our right cheek, and then we're supposed to turn the other cheek.

We love the 'what would Jesus do' bracelets, until someone asks us to carry their pack one mile, and we're supposed to carry it two.

We love the 'what would Jesus do' bracelets, until someone insults us. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 and 3 (I'm very much paraphrasing this): that Jesus was hurled every kind of hurt and insult imaginable, and yet He took it and said nothing, and left it with God. Could you do that? Can I do that?

1) Tefillah; 2) Teshuvah; then the last one is: 3) Tzedakah. This is a compound word: Tzedak - just that part of the word, is the word 'Righteous'. So you can see how Faith leads to Righteousness.

Tzedak, if you put the pictures on this, there's three letters: Tsadi; Dalet; Gof.

The picture of Tsadi is: a fish hook with bait on it. So when the Hebrew people saw the letter Tsadi, it meant: the desire of your heart, what lures you, what baits you, what draws your attention, what sort of Avon-thing happens? What desire in your heart is that? Tsadi is the picture of a fish hook with bait on it.

Dalet is the picture of an open door, which is easier to understand, because it just means: the 'pathway into something' or: 'open the door to'.

Gof is the picture of the back of a head.

In other words, the Hebrew idea of righteousness is this: the desire of your heart, opens the door to humility - that's righteousness.

If you put a 'ah', on the end of that - that is an open window, which means: 'to reveal something'. Remember, windows back then, were made of wood, not glass; so to 'open a window' meant 'to reveal something'; or: 'to let wind in'; or 'to let the spirit in'.

So the word Tzedakah means: "righteousness revealed".

Hebrew people have a way for doing their money, which is really cool, and you ought to check it out if you don't know it; because they have 4% of the population, but they have 40% of the money - which means they might be onto something. And they don't even believe in Jesus, most of them - it's just principle.

I was sitting by a rabbi once on an airplane, and it was one of those great 8-hour flights, that you get stuck on the runway for 2-hours. It's really cool, because there's so much room on an airplane, and so we got talking... So I said: listen, I've discovered this thing about Terumah; and first and second and third tithes - three different tithes; the way they do their money. Can I share that with you?

So I shared it, and he said: oh yeah, you've got it spot on. I said: thanks. He said: do you know what that whole thing's called? We have a word for the whole thing. I said: what? He said "Tzedakah", which means 'righteousness revealed'.

You see Jesus talking about it in Matthew 6. He says: when you do your acts of righteousness, do not do them before men to be seen, but do them before your heavenly Father, who is in secret. Tzedakah - acts of righteousness.

That word morphed over time to mean 'Generosity'; so that today, in certain Middle Eastern countries, the beggars sit on the side of the road, and they go: "Tzedakah, Tzedakah, Tzedakah, Tzedakah..." Show me righteousness, show me righteousness. To 'Reveal Righteousness' meant: 'to be generous'.

Jesus said: "your acts of righteousness were..." what? What were the three acts of righteousness? Prayer; fasting; and giving alms to the poor (Tzedakah).

Faith, then, is a mixture of: “turning my head in order to face the one who can bear the burden”.

As I turn my head, to face the one who can bear the burden, I change my mind to think like Him. As I change my mind to think like Him, He regenerates my heart, and lets me do at some points, even greater things than Him.

Tzedakah - that is faith; and living a life like this.

It's really easy to make grace cheap, because there's a part of grace that's free - but it's not cheap. Are you forgiven of every sin? Jesus said (in red letters): “Every sin a person commits will be forgiven him” - every sin. Every sin a person commits, shall be forgiven him; except for unforgiveness, and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. But does that mean that it's cheap? No, because Paul said it this way: “where sin abounds, grace abounds much more”. So you're going to have a hard time ever out-sinching grace.

Holiness is the best life. God might forgive sins; but people say: because God forgives sins, that means He's not punishing sin.

Let's just assume for a second, let's say: God doesn't punish sin. I'm not saying He doesn't, I'm just saying, let's assume for a second, an axiom that might be true. I don't think it is, but let's just say it is.

Even if God doesn't punish sin, sin has punishment built into it naturally. Sin has this thing called death, that's built into it by nature; so even if God takes His hand off the punishment of sin (even if God's not punishing sin any more), sin punishes you - just the natural consequences of what it is.

So the best life then, comes from a life that is built around: Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah; this is a daily thing. I love this definition of faith, because it's not a definition of faith that says: pray a prayer once, and you're in!

It's a definition of faith that says: “every day I can pick up my cross”. Every day I can turn my head, and face the one who bears the burden. Every day I need to change my mind, and make sure my mind is thinking like He does; and every day, this should be producing acts of righteousness.

It should produce something in life; and one of the things it produces is Trust. I want to talk to you, for the rest of this first session, about Trust.

We're going to talk about Leadership; and God's biggest idea: that one of the responsibilities we have as leaders, is to trust; and one of the trust factors, one of the things that trust is the antidote for, is temptation.

Years ago, this group of psychologists, they were doing a study. It was a longitudinal study, which is very rare, but they do it. What they do is: they take a group of people,

and they study them over a long period of time; the same group of people, over a very long period of time. It's called a longitudinal study.

What they did back in 1965 is, they took a group of 6-year-olds, and they were going to study that same group from 6 to 36; so from 1965 to 1995 they were going to track their progress. You'd have to compensate people pretty well to do this, I would imagine, but here's what they did when they were six years old is, they put all of these kids in a room.

This is one of the questions they were asking: how does a kid's ability to delay gratification at age 6, translate to that same kid's ability to delay gratification at 36? So they put homemade, piping-hot, chocolate-chip cookies in front of them! The kids came in, and sat around the table; and every one of them had a plate, with a piping-hot, still-smoking, freshly-homemade chocolate-chip cookie in front of them.

They were only given one set of instructions, because six year olds can't handle more than one set of instructions. The instruction was this: you cannot eat your cookie. Ooh!

If you eat your cookie, there will be no consequences. We're not going to be mad at you, but you will not get the prize.

If you can wait 10 minutes, and not eat your cookie for 10 minutes, then we're going to take your one cookie away - and we're going to give you three cookies! So if you can just wait 10 minutes, we're going to give you three cookies; but if you can't wait 10 minutes, you can eat your one - but that's all you'll get.

So they left the room, and then they go behind one of those like mirror things and film them. They watch the behavior of these kids sitting around, and you can see that their willpower starts to break down. One kid leans over and starts smelling his cookie. One kid actually took his plate and licked his cookie - because they didn't say you couldn't lick it; they just said you couldn't eat it!

Finally, there's this moment of break-down. The one kid, the kid that's going to break first, somebody's going to break first. The kid that's going to break first picks up his cookie, and there's this collective: NOOOOO!

It's kind of like in Star Wars III, remember when Anakin becomes Darth Vader? Remember that? He becomes Darth Vader, and he's Luke's father; and Anakin is like Luke. You kind of put it together; so in Star Wars III you're going into the movie theatre, knowing that he's going to become Darth Vader. But you're sitting there, and the whole way you're like: NOOO! If you could only know how this is going to turn out, this is going to be really bad for everybody!

How many of you know decisions like this are really easy to see in other people, but very difficult to see in us? It's very easy to do! So the kid picks up his cookie and eats it; and once one kid ate his cookie, then there was a chain reaction... Other kids started eating their cookie - but some kids held on; and so at exactly the 10 minute mark, the

people in charge of the study came in, and they took everybody's plate away. The plate that still had one cookie on it, they replaced it with three cookies; and the plates that had nothing on it - they got nothing.

The next day, they came in again. You would think that the kids who could not wait the first day, when they saw the three cookies come out, you would think the second day that they would wait - because they know three cookies are coming out. They can trust who's in charge, to do, what they say they were going to do; but what they actually found is: over the course of 21 days, that the kids who ate the cookie on day #1, kept eating the cookie every subsequent day.

Every subsequent day, they ate it quicker, to the point that by day #21, the kids who ate the cookie on day #1, actually as soon as the cookie went down, they just ate it. They didn't even give it a go; and the kids who waited on day #1, actually by day #21 found it very easy to not eat their cookie - found it very easy!

What the psychological study found, over 30 years was this: that a 6-year-olds ability to delay gratification was directly correlated to that same 6-year-olds ability to delay gratification at 36.

Now before you panic - I guess there's always Jesus! How many of you realise that a 6-year-old not being able to delay gratification, is one cookie instead of three; but a 36-year-old not being able to delay gratification - that's lost employment; that's buying huge items that you can't afford, with money you don't have, to impress people you don't like. That's huge ramifications! That's broken relationships. That's a spoiled brat, who just, if he can't get his way, runs every time.

How many of you realise that sin/temptation - there's just always more than meets the eye? It's just always bigger than what it looks.

I want to talk to you the rest of the session about Temptation and Trust; because temptation is one of those topics that leaders have to deal with; and it's also one of those topics that, if you're here tonight, and you've been saved for 40 years - you deal with temptation.

If I took a group of people, and I put someone who's been saved 40 years; someone who's been saved 30; someone who's been saved 20; someone who's been saved 10; someone who's been saved 10 minutes; and someone who doesn't even know who God is; if I put them in a study group, and I said: your topic for tonight is temptation - everybody would have a story to tell. It's not something that's limited to just a few people. It brings us all into one boat.

I want to use the temptation of Jesus to bring this together; so in Matthew 3:16-17, then it goes straight into Matthew 4. It says this: "As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him. A voice said from heaven: this is My Son

whom I love, with whom I'm well pleased". So you have this huge fireworks show at Jesus' baptism.

If you're a dad, and you made this big of a deal at your son's baptism, the church people would just go nuts. "What - do you think he's that special?" I mean there's lightning, thunder and birds - all kinds of things happening. "This is My Son whom I love, with whom I'm well pleased".

Next sentence: Then, then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil - which is kind of an odd sequence of events, isn't it? "This is My Son, I love Him, I'm so proud of Him. Now come on, you've got to be tempted by the devil".

You can see why, in two chapters, when He's teaching His disciples to pray, He says: and when you pray, part of what you say is: please lead me not into temptation - lead me not into temptation. Why? Because Jesus was led into temptation - and it just is hard work.

After fasting 40 days and 40 nights He was hungry, and the tempter came to Him and said: "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread"; and Jesus answered: "it is written: man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God".

Then the devil took Him to the holy city, and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. He said: "if You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: He'll command His angels concerning You, and they'll lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against the stone". And Jesus answered him: "it is also written, don't put the Lord your God to the test".

And again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world and their splendor. "All this, I'll give to you, if you'll bow down and worship me". "Away from me Satan! For it is written: worship the Lord your God and serve Him only". Then the devil left Him, and the angels came and attended Him.

This is such an odd passage of scripture; and the truth is, the first time I ever read this, with the exception of the last temptation, I couldn't figure out why the first two were sin. The last temptation was: worship Satan - that one's obvious okay.

The first two temptations: "turn stones into bread" - what's wrong with that? Who gave Jesus the power to turn stones into bread? God did. Has Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights? Yes. Was He hungry? Yes. Would God want Him to be hungry? No. Would God be okay with Jesus using power He gave Him to meet a legitimate need? You'd think.

The second temptation was: "throw yourself off the mountain, and believe angels to catch you". Odd yes; but sin? I realised that none of us will be tempted like this - none of us. You will never, within reason, be tempted to turn stones into bread. You'll just go down to New World, and buy you some bread!

You'll never be tempted to throw yourself off of a mountain. Imagine that: "hey, got an idea - throw yourself off a mountain, and believe God to see if He'll catch you"! Probably won't happen. Most of us won't be tempted to worship Satan - most of us. That kind of, is just too obvious.

So in a way, none of us will be tempted like this; but in another way, every one of us will be tempted like this. Turn stones into bread - every one of us are tempted daily, to meet legitimate needs, in illegitimate ways. It's a huge one: meet legitimate needs - in illegitimate ways. Your needs are legitimate; but you have an illegitimate way for you to meet it.

All of us, particularly people who call themselves 'faith people', there's a fine line between faith and stupidity; and so particularly 'faith people' were tempted to presume upon God's power. We just presume upon it. Throw yourself off that mountain, and believe God to catch you!

In church work, we do it all the time; like we say: hey, we've got an idea, and it's not well planned. It might be a little immoral, maybe even illegal; but it's an idea - and we don't have the money to even come close to doing it. No common-sense of any kind tells us that we're in a position to try to accomplish this - but we're going to believe God.

That's how we frame it! If that's faith, then it's holy, but there's another way. If it's flesh, then it easily becomes: we're just going to presume upon God's power.

It sounds like this: I'm going to do what I want to do anyway, then I'll just believe God to fix it up. Jesus is like: God doesn't work that way.

In the South - I'm from the South by the way. In the South, smoking cigarettes is no big deal. In California, it's illegal to smoke inside a building; but In South Carolina, it's like illegal NOT to smoke inside a building; and I've prayed for people all over the South with lung cancer.

They've smoked four packs a day for their whole life, and you ought to see what their lungs would look like, if they were taken out of their body. So I pray for them; and then they go - and they still smoke! And I say: what are you doing? They say: oh we'll just believe God. We'll just believe God. We do things like that all the time - we presume upon God's power.

The third temptation is to take a short cut. Satan offers Him all the kingdoms of the world - which was Jesus' anyway; it just wasn't Jesus' right then.

Psalms 115:16, says: "the highest heavens belong to God, but the earth He's given to man". Then eventually, at the end of the story, it all goes back to God's, and God uses us to rule; but right now, the kingdom of this world - it's given to us; and to the Prince of the Power of the Air.

So the Prince of the Power of the Air says: hey, I'll give it to you - now. I'll give you a short cut: if you worship me, you can avoid the cross - you can avoid all that pain - and I'll give you the end of it anyway.

But Jesus realised something very quickly: that a kingdom, is not a kingdom, without people. So to meet a legitimate need, in an illegitimate way, is to take a short cut to God's plan, and to presume upon God's power.

These are the temptations; and I realised there's a couple of keys to beating temptation, that isn't what we think. Let me just tell you what doesn't work: willpower. Your emotions will override your willpower, every single time. Willpower just typically doesn't work.

Has anybody, besides me, ever promised God that you would never do something - ever never, ever never, ever never again? How many of you lied? We all lied, yeah. But two things will help us beat temptation, and number one is this:

If we can simply pause, step back, and realise that there's far more at stake with temptation than meets the eye - there's far more!

One of the biggest lies in the world is: my behavior is between me and God. Listen, if your behavior is between you and God, then do whatever you want to do - God can handle you! Your behavior is never between you and God; your behavior affects everybody around you.

There's always much more at stake, with temptation, than meets the eye. The temptation is: oh, it's just me and God, and this one situation. It's just this one. One more beer - which, how many of you know, for some people, is never just one more beer. It's broken families; it's anger outbursts. It leads to other things.

It's just one more piece of cake; I'll start my diet tomorrow, it's just between me and God; and this one piece of cake. It's just this one new car purchase I can't afford. I'm going to get into debt for six years, for this one impulse, this one moment. It's just between me and God, and He's okay with it. It's just this one moment. It's just this one outburst of anger. It's just this one bit of rage.

I was with a guy once (he was 52), and we were praying together, a whole bunch of us were praying together. There was a lady who I'd never met before, and there was a group of us. This lady was very prophetic, very much the real deal, and we'd never met her before, but she asked if she could pray for this man, and I said: sure.

So he came forward, and she said: sir, I'm seeing you crouched in the foetal position. It's a yellow house on the outside, with old wood panelling on the wall; and you're crouched in the foetal position by a stove. There's a stove, a wood stove that was used to heat the whole house, and you're crouched in the foetal position. You're roughly nine years old, I'm guessing, and I'm seeing your father walk into the room, and your father

walks into the room and he's yelling, and he said this to you, and she quoted something that this man's father had said to him when he was nine.

This man who I knew very well - and he's the real deal, and he is not an emotional freak of nature, or anything like that - this man started heaving and crying. I'm talking about crying, to the point stuff's coming out of his nose; stuff's coming out of his mouth. I knew this guy. This guy was the real deal. He is crying and weeping so hard from that; and she said: that's been the seed-bed of your depression for all of these years.

This man had been hospitalised four different times for depression in his life, and I thought: maybe when his dad did that; because he kept saying: "my dad was a good man. It was just that..."; maybe when his dad did that, he convinced himself: "oh, it was just one outburst of anger." It was just one fit of rage. God will forgive me anyway. No, no, no. This affected - this man was 53 years old, so for 44 years he had been dramatically affected by that one moment.

I think sometimes with temptation, if we can just step back and realise, that there's something far more at stake with temptation than meets the eye.

If we could ever just step back and realise: if I buy this car, I'm going to have to make payments for six years. I'm going to end up paying way more than the car's worth; and it's going to go down so fast in value I can't keep up.

And yeah, if I just drink this, if it's just this one more beer, if it's just this one more than whatever. But it's not going to be that. If this one more beer is going to push me over the edge, then I might get a DUI on the way home. I might yell at my wife. This is going to affect everybody.

This one more piece of cake, it could be just one more piece of cake, but if I step back and realise this could be the thing that throws me over the edge to diabetes. This could be the thing that causes heart disease. It's never just one more piece of cake.

The first thing is: there's always more at stake with temptation than meets the eye. The second thing is: overcoming temptation has far more to do with who we trust, than our willpower.

It has far more to do with this: where's our eye on? What are we thinking like?

Beating temptation has far more to do with: do we trust the people to bring three cookies out?

Do we trust that God's way - is three cookies -better than our way?

Where in our life are we settling for one cookie, when God intends for us to have three? Where in our life does God have three cookies waiting for us, if we'll just die to our need to be in control of the one?

It's not so much about willpower, of not eating the one cookie; it has everything to do with: do I trust that the three cookies is a better way.

I've had so many teenage girls in my counseling office, and they say stuff like this: I thought that he would love me more, if I crossed the line morally with him, and so I did, and when I woke up, I was lonelier than ever before.

It wasn't so much that they succumbed to sexual stuff; they do succumb to sexual stuff, but bigger than that. It's more: for a moment, for just a brief moment, I trusted that my way was better than God's way. All it takes is just that moment, and it affects their whole life.

In a room this size, most of us, anybody over a certain age, would have something, some decision, that they did way back in their past, that they thought was just about the moment; that they still, every now and then, think about today.

It's trust. See Jesus died, not to just forgive us from this stuff (because we are forgiven); Jesus died to free us from slavery to it. Jesus died so that we would not have any slave drivers in our life. Jesus died so we would be free from this stuff, so that we could be free to be leaders in God's biggest idea - free from the slave driver of temptation, free from the slave driver to eat the one cookie instead of the three.

It's all about perspective. Remember the Wizard of Oz? Dorothy, and the Tin Man? They were all so frightened of the wizard, just scared to death of the wizard; and they'd get in (the 1937 version is pretty cool) it's this huge curtain, and he's like: who dares call me? But when the wizard finally steps out, he's like a midget that's bald. So he comes out, and this guy that was so scary and spooky, is like five foot two. Remember the response? They were like: you're the wizard!? You're the guy we've been scared of?

In every temptation, there's a guy behind a big screen that makes us so scared, like we have to give into this; but the truth of it is that, if he ever revealed himself, we would realise how weak it really is.

If we could hold on just once, if we could not eat that cookie once, it would give us so much reinforcement when God gives us the three, that the next time it's so much easier, and so much easier, until finally we have beaten that thing; because Jesus didn't just die to forgive us. Jesus died so we could be slave-driver-free.

In other words, sin can't tell you what to do. In the midst of temptation, the tendency is to think that the only thing going on is what's going on right now. Should I eat this dessert? Should I call him back? Should I do this thing, which might be a sin? Should I make this decision? There's so much more.

And Jesus says: temptation - it's not just about breads, and hills, and devils and angels - it's about me and you. So much could have been sabotaged, right there. Imagine if Jesus had rationalised: man, I'm starving. God wouldn't want me to starve. I'm starving;

and in the moment, what if He'd have rationalised: I'll meet this legitimate need - in an illegitimate way. It's just between Me and God, and God will forgive Me. What if He would have done that?

It's not just between Him and God. There is far more at stake than meets the eye. He tells a story about God providing bread from heaven. I love this story. I love this part of Jesus. He looks at the devil, and He says: you must have forgotten who you're dealing with. I come from a group of people, who had to believe God in a desert, with no food and no water to meet our needs - and He did every single day. Do you remember where I came from?

I came from a group of people that Moses got out of Egypt towards the Promised Land. I come from a group of people who came up against the Red Sea, and the Red Sea parted. There was a 30 feet high wall of water on each side. Moses is trying to get five million people - you're talking about the whole nation of New Zealand, plus some. He's trying to get them through a 30 foot high wall of water.

Can you imagine the challenges; because not everybody would have been full of faith - somebody would have been complaining about the wind! If you've ever watched an action movie, you know there's some woman that just won't co-operate. She's a good-hearted woman; but she just can't - so she'd be standing there: "I just can't".

And the Pharaohs coming, and all the chariots are coming, and Moses is like: get in the water! Moses is trying to get everybody through the water; and little Johnny's sticking his hand in the water; there's a 30-foot-high wall of water, and little Johnny's trying to catch the mullet. Little Johnny's mum went: "Johnny, don't put your hand in the water! It could crash in"! Little Billy's down playing in the mud, making sand castles.

Moses is trying to get everybody going. Everybody goes, he gets them out of the water, and he looks, and he's fixing to lower the boom on the Pharaoh. He looks down and little Johnny's playing in the mud again.

Moses is like: would somebody get little Johnny out of the water! He gets little Johnny out, and he closes it down, kills the entire Egyptian army. Now how far, do you think that Moses would have credibility for, from then? Doing this - water does this, you walk through, it closes down on the largest army in the world. For how long do you think he should have credibility for? You'd think for the rest of his life, aye?

But how many of you, who have ever been in leadership, know that's just not true? The very people that you think would be there for you, through thick and thin, are the people who will not. Yeah, people are fickle. Three days later, they wanted to kill Moses; like, they were going to kill him. Moses had to retreat up a mountain, to keep them from killing him. Why? Because they got thirsty!

What, did you bring us out here to die? It's just people - so God says: hit the rock. Hit the rock. Remember flannel graphs in Sunday School? Remember how big that rock

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