

WHERE CAN I FIND WISDOM?

SERIES: HOW TO: LIFE | WEEK 2 | 6.21.2020

Well, good morning! Happy Father's Day! I know there are, men, many things you could have chosen today. I want to speak honor over you for choosing to sit down, sit down with your family, those that you love and to be a part of church today. So thank you so much for doing that. I believe that as we study Proverbs, as we think about wisdom, you are key in imparting that wisdom and that wisdom to your family. I thank you, Cliff, for the words that you just spoke, spoken with humility and, truthfully, wisdom; that wisdom that's needed to connect with others to say, "I can't do this alone."

Happy Father's Day!

And I'm going to say to all of you who are taking part of this online experience, thank you for jumping into this. Until we hit one of the later phases and right now we're thinking the beginning of August, we just think this is going to be our primary means of communicating with you, of connecting with you our primary service, so thank you for choosing this one. We know that there are those right now who, the events of the last 3-4 months have put them in a situation where they need to find an outlet where they can be face to face. And so for those who really are in that spot we have opened up and given that opportunity, but for those of you who are either high risk or not in that spot, I'm so glad we have this. So thanks for joining us on Livestream today.

Before we jump into the Proverbs, we're going to be in Proverbs 2 today, I would love to say a word of prayer with you. But again, thank you fathers, thank you church, thank you for your understanding, for your love, for your compassion for each other, and even just trying to be in unity in this time. We love you so much. I love being your pastor. I love bragging about you everywhere I go. Let's just talk to Jesus though because He's the One that we put our focus on in this church.

Jesus,

Thank You so much for your bride, the church, those who have chosen to follow you, that You love so much, that You gave your life for. And I pray that each and every person listening to these words right now would feel that your love and your forgiveness and your care and your compassion, that they would find welling up within themselves a real joy of their salvation and a hope in Jesus alone today. And I pray that the words that we speak from this wise man Solomon inspired by You in the Scripture, I pray that they would hit us where we need to be hit today. I pray that they would minister to us in a very real way.

Lord, I want to pray for each person that's struggling today in any way, anything they're concerned about, anything that's weighing on them, something they can't figure out, I pray that the wisdom of your Word today – You said ask for it and You'll give it – we're asking for it and may we receive it.

We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

So in keeping with that theme of Father's Day, Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, it's as if in this book he wants to pass down this wisdom. That's why I love reading it. When he asks God for wisdom and God says I'm going to give you that and everything else, and then he proceeds to write it down, I feel like I'm being given a gift that I can get the wisdom that God gave to this man. And throughout this book some 64 times he writes to my son. And any of you who have ever had kids you know exactly what that's like, there's something inside of you that wants in the worst sort of way to say, "Here's a few things that I've learned in life, some information that I picked up on – I want you to have that. I want you to follow that." And that's what he says here to my son.

So Chapter 2 of Proverbs, right at the very beginning of Proverbs, he says son, my son, and then he says

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"if" – and I'm not going to capitalize on this but I want to say this to you, if you want to look over this chapter you'll find three times at the beginning of this chapter up through verse 5 where he'll say "if." I highlighted that "if." It really helped me divide up this chapter and see it for what it's saying. And then twice right after that it says "then" – then, so if you do these three things *then* this is what's going to happen. And then he wraps up by going *so...* [*gestures then this will happen*]. So it's like son, here's what [NO AUDIO 0:31:44.7 TO 0:31:43.0] – if you'll do this, then this will happen and this will happen, so also you have to realize this. So that's sort of the structure of what we're going to say today, and I believe it's so incredibly helpful and here's why. What he's going to say is as you're trying to get wisdom, if you'll do these things then these things will happen. No commands in this text, just a helpful structure for us to understand the Proverbs, to understand how to get this wisdom that we so want and we so long for. So I'm just gonna read a few words; I'm gonna start out with these if's and starting in verse 1, it says this:

¹ *My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
² making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;*

– PROVERBS 2:1-2 (ESV)

When I look at this "if" I wrote a word next to it and I'm just going to admit up front, it turns out this morning that if we were to break this message up into four parts there would be four P's. I hate that. I am not that kind of a preacher, the 4 P's of Proverbs 2, so maybe that's a 5th P. But you've got lots of P's in Proverbs 2 so if you're taking notes the 1st P that I would love for you to hear is *posture*. So he says if you're going to receive these words, if you want to hear these words of wisdom that I have here in the Proverbs, then you're going to have to posture yourself to get that.

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Now very simply one of the things I think is fascinating about this, you'll note if you ever get together with someone and what they're saying is interesting to you, the first thing you're going to do is you're going to be reaching for a pen or a pencil—and for me it's a 3x5 card or these days if I don't have that I go to the notes in my iPhone and I pull it out—and oftentimes I'll say to the person, "Hey, listen I'm not texting, I'm actually taking notes on what you're saying." And then you lean forward and you listen, and that's what he's saying here, he says, son, if you want to receive these words of wisdom, lean forward, lean into this, and I want you to treasure up these commandments within you. And he says "make your ear attentive to wisdom."

I've noticed something here recently. I thought it was something that took place when you got older and I'm not owning that I'm getting older, but sometimes I notice in a restaurant when the music's loud over me I can't hear. And when someone's giving me wisdom I like to put my ear up like this or I'll turn towards them because I want to give ear to that, I want to hear it. Here's what we know, in our world there's a whole lot of things we can listen to. If you're like me, I'm listening to a ton of podcasts. There's a lot of voices literally speaking in our ears, and really, some of them are good and some of them contain wisdom, and I hope you're listening to those that are good and that contain wisdom. But here he says think carefully, listen to the right stuff, choose what matters, and then he says incline your heart. And when he says incline your heart to understanding, like, you're going to read this and you're going to make a decision, you're going to determine I'm going to get this—this is what we talked about last week—we understand it in our head but we're going to put it into practice. That's the first one, the posture, leaning in, listening, deciding I'm going to do something with this.

POSTURE ► LEANING IN .. LISTENING .. DECIDING TO DO SOMETHING

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Look at verse 3 it says this:

³ *yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,*

– PROVERBS 2:3 (ESV)

That's the second one, and I'm just gonna say this second "P" is *prayer*. What he's saying here is if you're hearing this wisdom, what we're gonna know is this is something that if you really want to understand, if you really want to go deep in it, it's not enough just to see some words on a page. It's not enough to just put the quotable on social media or to put it on your screensaver. You're going to have to listen carefully to it but you have to pray about it, you have to seek out God, you have to pray to God on this. And what's fascinating about this, he says, "*raise your voice*." This is something that happens in times of deep distress. The word "raise your voice" in the Hebrew language is very literally an emotional word, it's a word that happens when you're in a tough spot. That tells me that he's saying to his son, "Son, there's going to be a whole lot of events that happen in life. You gotta be careful who you're going to listen to, you're going to have to go to the right place, you're going to have to get really attentive to it, but you're going to have to talk to God about it." And there is nothing wrong with being bold and strong with God on this.

P Lots of communication styles out there. Talk about sitting at that restaurant and someone's talking to you, you know, used to be sitting back like this [*sits back in his chair, arms folded across chest*] or, you know, fold your leg like this [**Figure 1**] and sit back, and oftentimes our conversations are sort of lazy and sort of easy going, and that's just a nice thing. I go out on a date with my wife and I just want to sit there and sip on a cup of hot coffee and talk with her. But there's other times where it's like you got to work out something and you get loud and you begin to talk about it and you say, "Well, what if we do this?" and "What if we do this?" and "We need to do this." And I believe he's saying here go to God in prayer, and don't just be lazy, you know [*casually leans back in his chair*], "Ah, God, hello, good morning." No, this is a time of, "God, I need You! God, I'm struggling in the area of finances!" "God, I'm struggling in the area of my marriage!" "God, I'm struggling raising my kid." "God, I'm struggling with this work relationship." "God, how do I figure it out?" "God, You say this here, what do I do with this?" And he's saying to his son, "Hey, lean in, have the posture, be ready to listen to these, but don't hesitate to pray, to shout out to God, to lift up your voice to Him." There's something different when you get into that mode of conversation, and he says do this and it's a key word: "*for understanding*."



Figure 1

When you read God's Word that's why we got to talk to Him and ask Him, it doesn't matter what you and I think it's saying, what matters is what the author said. What matters is what the original author says. What matters is what God says here. We gotta be really careful. I hear things quoted all the time; they sound good, they rhyme, they make a nice little saying on a billboard. I don't know if it's right. I don't know if I'm understanding it right. I don't know if it's in the right context. He says hey listen, when you're reading your Bible lean in, learn, be willing to change your heart and your mind, and when you're doing so pray, call out to God for understanding.

Trust in the Lord
with all your heart,
and
do not lean on
your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)

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And the third "P" is *persistence*. Listen to this, verse 4:

⁴ if you seek it like silver

PROVERBS 2:4a (ESV)

P What's he saying? If you seek it like you seek gaining finances, like you've sought making a living, and if you've decided, you know, there's a certain car I want to buy but we use up every dollar that we earn right now, how would I earn that car? And we want to buy a nicer home but we are approved for everything we can mortgage-wise, so I'm gonna have to get some more money, how would I get it? You would sit down and you would set up a plan. And you and I know, we've done it – you've done it, you've done it to prepare for a vacation, you've done it to prepare for retirement. You sit down and you begin to do the math and you begin to do the numbers and you do the research and you google this and you google that. You make a phone call and you're studying it and you're chasing it down because you're bound and determined to get it.

E He says this thing called wisdom of how to do life right, that's why we're saying read one chapter of the Proverbs a day, one Proverb a day based on the date of today. And the reason why we're hoping that you'll do this for the entire three months that we're going through this is that this will start getting into your head—I'm going to go after this; I'm going to keep on looking at it; I'm going to keep on studying it. If you decide I need to get some more money—you see it says, "*seek it like silver*"—I need to get some more money to make this purchase, you wouldn't just once a week sit down and think about it for one hour or listen to a TED Talk for an hour to try to figure it out. No, this would be a passionate search to figure it out. So whatever it is that you're wanting, "God, I need wisdom in this area," he's saying hey listen, if you're gonna do this, my son, you have to get in the right posture, you're gonna have to call out to God, and you're gonna have to diligently search it out. You're gonna have to diligently study it. In fact he says here it's as if you're going after a treasure, seeking after a hidden treasure.

and search for it as for hidden treasures,

PROVERBS 2:4b (ESV)

Again, hidden treasure isn't just sitting out there waiting for you to grab, so you're having to go and look in some different places, you're having to go dig up some holes and see if it's there and to chase down some rabbit trails that turn out to be dead-end trails. He says you're gonna have to chase it down. And I would just tell you that we pour a lot of effort into the things that matter the most to us.

You know, I just talked about silver there, you know, how often have I chased after figuring something out and, you know, every talk I hear talks about, you know, how you get more money, how you can do well in this downturn and this kind of stuff, and it's sort of motivating. You know what's more motivating? To live life according to wisdom. I mean, when Solomon thought of everything he could get—he could have asked for anything; he could ask for more money, he could have asked for more things, he could have asked for more prestige—but he realized if I have wisdom all the rest of that is going to fall right in line. And so he's saying to his son, you may not have gotten what God gave me but you've got it here, you're just going to have to lean in on this. You're going to have to pray about this and boldly and loudly, and you're going to have to truly go seeking after it. You have to study, you have to dig, you have to learn, you're gonna have to grow in this. And then what happens next is he says this he says, "then." As was mentioned, if you'll lean in on this with the posture, if you'll pray about this with boldness and passion, and if you'll really have a persistence in chasing this thing down, "then" – verse 5 it says this:

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*⁵ then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
⁷ he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸ guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.*

PROVERBS 2:5-8 (ESV)

So much there but if you just simplify it for a moment, what's so great about what you're reading there is our focus in on God is going to be foundational, and if you'll seek Him and pray for it and be persistent with it He's going to be at the center of your world. If you study your Word, you study your Bible, you're going to get God's wisdom and you're going to get God's results. The fear of the Lord, the understanding of God, understanding of the things way beyond this earth—doesn't that sound good right now? I mean, everything around us is confusing. Everything around us is so divided. Everything around us is so shook up. Imagine if we could understand what's beyond us, the One who created us. And even that last phrase there is so great that He, God, guards the paths of justice and watches over the ways of his saints.

We said it last week, when it comes to wisdom—and Solomon says it here—is God's got to be at the center. When it comes to our lives, God's got to be at the center. What we're listening to, what we're chasing after, what we're learning—God's got to be at the center. If you can't explain it with theology, there is no point going to philosophy. You've got to know God. That was the first *then*.

The second *then*, by the way, the first *then* was mentioned in the first chapter, we mentioned that last week. The second *then* was mentioned in the first chapter. So knowing God was huge and in the first chapter the other thing that was huge, and we said it last week, was character traits and they're re-mentioned here in verse 9. He says:

⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path;

PROVERBS 2:9 (ESV)

We talked about it last week, words that are incredibly relevant in our time that we truthfully would love to get our arms around, but words that have been co-opted to who knows what they mean to a point that many of us are even confused about them. And we come here to the Proverbs and I want God's wisdom and in the midst of saying I want God's wisdom he says there's a couple character traits I want you to have, Lee, and I want you to have just built into you that I'm going to train you if you'll go through my wisdom "then," and the first one he says is righteousness. And we talked about this; righteousness always comes from God and He gives it to us, He places it upon us because of what Jesus did on the cross because we trust in that – it never comes from morality. The world we live in the righteous is all about morality; in God's world it's all about Jesus and Him bringing His righteousness upon you.

The second thing is justice. Justice by definition is a restoration with God, so that's the biggest sense of the word, but it's also in in our restoration with each other making whole again what's been broken. You and I have lived enough years to know that we broke a few things and we're broken in relationships and relational activities, actions and words, and justice is all about restoring what's lost in the midst of that brokenness.

Equity, living rightly and the result being the very last thing that he mentions here when he says, "every good path." Result, he goes on to say two things, one's to men and one's to women. One is about men

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you don't want to be around; one is about women that you don't want to be around. Let me read these to you. He says in verse 11:

- ¹¹ discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you,
¹² delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech,
¹³ who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness,
¹⁴ who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil,
¹⁵ men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.*

PROVERBS 2:11-15 (ESV)

And by the way, we might say men, I mean, this could be mankind, do you know people like that? I'm confident that as soon as we read that you know people that either have been in your life in the past or are currently in your life who their only desire is to live in wickedness and in darkness and in evil and in sin and as a result of that, when you get around them you are peeled away and you are taken down a path you don't like to be on. Some of you have found yourself in that situation in a business relationship. You didn't see it when you went in and now you're looking at it and then to unwind it is not an easy thing to do. But what he says here that I think is helpful is wisdom, as we study the Proverbs, as we get to know this, that wisdom is going to give you and me discretion so as not to be sucked away by these evil men who will take us down a wrong path.

I know for me this is one of the things I pray for my kids oftentimes because today you can meet a friend, you can get a new friend group or connect with a person or a group of people or a business relationship or a financial relationship or marital relationship that would take you away from God. That God would give us the wisdom that when we see that that we'd be alerted to that and not go down that path.

The second thing it talks about, describes, is so you will be delivered from the forbidden woman and listen to these words from verse 16:

- ¹⁶ So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with her smooth words,
¹⁷ who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God;
¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed;
¹⁹ none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.*

– PROVERBS 2:16-19 (ESV)

And any who have ever wandered in this area of their lives would tell you the sin of adultery, the sin of pornography, the sin of going to someone other than your wife, takes you further, faster, longer than you ever thought you would go, ever wanted to go; and the pain is way wider spread than anything you can perceive to this day. Wisdom in the Proverbs will speak to this often. And he goes here's what you need to know when you seek this wisdom, when you pray for this wisdom, when you're ready for it and you go after it, here's what you can know—that that wisdom is going to protect you from these evil men that are going to take you down a path that you'll never return from and it'll go bad for you, or this forbidden woman who's going to lead you into adultery or pornography and this kind of stuff. And so this is one of those things where, you know, those two things could just totally tank your life as you know it. And here's what we say, "Well, then I want to dig into these Proverbs so that I can get [NO AUDIO 0:12:15.7 TO 0:12:14.9] my head so that I can be saved from those kinds of possibilities.

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And let me just share one last thing and I want to read it to you and then I want to get your response to it. So if you have the chat on your computer right now, I want you to give your quick first visceral response to what I'm about ready to read and I just want you to put it into the chat right now. Verse 20:

²⁰ So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous.

²¹ For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it,

²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

– PROVERBS 2:20-22 (ESV)

What's your response to that? Basically, if you follow wisdom, great things are going to happen to you; if you don't follow wisdom, bad things are going to happen to you. Has that been your experience? Is that your experience? How do you respond to that? I'm getting a bunch of you; you gotta jump in there, you gotta write your response.

And one of the things we would love is that you all would just interact back and forth on this, and we have online pastors to connect with you. In fact, I think in some ways a great thing with online church is that we have more opportunity to do this than we do when we were in the room together. I can sort of get a nod, maybe a clap, or maybe a raised hand in the room, but I would love to just have you be responding because that would create some conversation because here's what some would say it's like, that's what I want. Man, if there's a deterministic thing, I follow this wisdom then grand things are going to happen to me, I'm in.

And there's just as quick someone out there who's looking back at me going, "Um, sorry. I've lived life long enough I know it doesn't work out that way. I see wicked, awful, godless people really, really, really thriving." The psalmist talks about this often; the psalmist is ticked about that. Like, why do the wicked do well? Why do those who try to follow God and serve God end up having the hard things? Why do bad things happen? Why do they get sick? I mean, why does that person that is totally hating God all the time and hurting everyone live for like insane amounts of time, and that person that was the sweetest most wonderful godly, lovely person in your life, they died young? That's been your experience; it's been my experience. There's something in us that says, "Yeah, I want to hear that if I do this it'll turn out good." And there's some preachers that preach that message and it's like you gotta do this, and a lot of those people struggle filled with guilt. But what you're going to find out in the Proverbs is there's a lot of Proverbs that say things like raise up a child in the way they should go and when they're old they're not going to depart from it, and you go, "Well, a couple of my kids turned out really, really well, but I'm not sure about the rest. Um, I'm not sure if they're there yet." That's sort of the same type of thing. So I want to put some words to this.

First of all, deterministic would be this: If you do this, good things will happen. And what we just discussed was we know in our sinful world sin fouls that, and sin messes up things that shouldn't be messed up. That's how we talked a bit ago and justice is that that brokenness in this world. The brokenness that you and I are experiencing right now is because we don't follow God's ways. God's ways are pure, they're right, they're just, but because sin came in this world and we took the bait. Some of you have been in that situation this week. Some of you have had a situation already today in a relationship within your own home, it's not going well and you're sitting alone because of how you responded. Sin has a way of just messing up things in a huge way. But the deterministic mindset says if you do this, this happens and it's good.

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Here's the last set of P's if I'm going to give them to you today. So, you know, we started out with posture, with prayer, with persistence. This last one will be this: *Probable* or *proverbial* and maybe this will help you as we study this book, as we go down and try to understand the wisdom in this book. This book's wisdom needs to be understood as *proverbial* wisdom and that would say that in most cases this situation is true. And some would struggle saying, "Well, if it's ever not true, then the Bible is not true." No. There are things at play that interfere with the way things were meant to be. And so we're going to talk about probable versus proverbial, and here's what we want you to hear: IF you do this, if you follow the wisdom here, the *possibility* of good things and the right things happening highly increases.

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You ever do anything that when you look back on you go, "I was spot on. I am really struggling to find anything I did wrong. I mean, maybe I'm missing something but from everything I can tell I did the right things along the way and it still went [*makes a raspberry sound*]." I was just reviewing a few of those with my family this week. It's just frustrating. How is it that I followed what I thought was right to the best—but think about this: How much worse might have things have been had I not acted according to wisdom? You know, we said this last week, what's the wise thing to do instead of the foolish thing to do? The Proverbs is always bringing up the wise person and the foolish person. If I'm going down the foolish path, think of the destruction and how much worse things would have been, how much worse that child may have turned out, or that situation may have turned out as opposed to we went down a different path.

I read a story this week about a lady and she struggled because she was exhausted, bloated in pain all the time, and what was interesting about the story is she explained how she is the epitome and picture of health. The diet she takes in evidently is like the purest, cleanest, and like any nutritionist would say, "Oh, wow! That's borderline impossible but that's spot on." Her exercise regimen was so balanced, so managed in such a huge way. She had just impeccable habits and behaviors and she did all of those things and she still was not healthy. And if she had gone into a doctor one of the things they may have said is, "Here's some things to look at," she was already doing all of those things. So doing everything right and still not healthy—so what do you do with that?

Well, I guess this doesn't work. I guess I'm just gonna just start going and eating all the ice cream I can, lots of potato chips, I'm gonna just do full-on fries covered with cheese and all sorts of goodies. I'm just gonna go full out. I'm gotta drink a two-liter with every meal. Evidently the perfect diet didn't help me at all so here we go – no holds barred. And a lot of times that's sort of our response to Scripture. It's like I did it God's way, it didn't turn out that I'm in this walking in the way of good and the upright will inhabit the land thing, the bad guy won, good guy lost, evidently God's not real. I'm out. Let's go eat potato chips, fries, and soda.

But imagine if this woman had chosen to do so. Imagine if this woman said, "I'm giving up; not exercising anymore and doing all of that stuff." Imagine what health risks would have been added to the three that she had been struggling with for so long. And as the doctors continued to chase this down what they found is that she had a genetic disorder, it was an underlying problem, and all the dietary changes and exercise changes all in the world wouldn't have fixed that genetic area. You see, wisdom never ignores that sin exists and that sin, as long as we're on this side of Heaven, is impacting everything about our lives but we continue to chase after wisdom. If you follow wisdom, I believe – and that's what I believe these last verses are saying – you will get the best possible results this side of Heaven.

Wrap up: Simply don't get distracted by *this doesn't seem to be working, the bad seem to be winning. I read the one-liner and I posted it and nothing good happened.* Listen, lean in on this, have a posture of I

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gotta get this, I gotta learn it. Pray, shout out to God in the midst of your distress, "I've gotta figure it out. I gotta find it." And then just search it like silver, like you did for a living, go after it and remember: Live in the probableness and the proverbial that this is not necessarily a promise but under most cases it's a win; in some ways things would have been a lot worse had you not followed this side of Heaven. I hope that you'll jump into this this week. I hope that you'll continue reading one Proverb a day, that you'll follow the date of the day, and that you'll really take his instructions to his son on this Father's Day. It's like dad going, "Son, lean in on this, listen carefully, scream out to God if you have any questions, study it deeply, and live in the probable of this. If you'll follow this, you're gonna get the best results this side of Heaven." Love you, church.

Lord Jesus,

I know there's a bunch of people that have just different categories that they're trying to figure out right now. I pray that they'll turn to You, and I pray they grab on hard to You in this.

We love You, Jesus. It's in Your Name we pray. Amen.

Hey, I want to thank you for – so many of you are giving generously and it really shows the things that matter most to you. It shows where your treasures are, you know, he talks about searching after a treasure like we just read, that the spiritual things and the spiritual-changed lives and the hurting people, that's where your treasure is. And even if you don't know quite what all those needs are to know that I'm sending it on to Heaven, that's going out ahead of me. So as you give, um, there's a box in the chat there where you can click on that, there's also a way to automate that, and some of you are still just mailing in the checks and, um, you're old school like that, I actually did that last week myself. So praise God. Thank you for giving. And we're down to – our budget year ends the end of June, so thank you for giving to help us catch up and be right where we need to be by the end of the budget year. God bless you. Thank you so much for being part of this today.

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