

**23 July 2023 Celebration and Relationships Part 5: Intentional Celebration
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Scripture References: Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT; Matthew 1:22-25 NKJV; John 15:7-11 NLT; John 15:16-19 NLT; John 15:23-16:1 NLT; Luke 9:23-26 NKJV; Luke 9:23-26 TPT; Luke 9:23-25 MSG

Thank you. Glory to God. God is good; every day, every moment, every morning. When we wake up, God is with us. When we are asleep, God is with us. Do you know that the Father, He never sleeps? Because He's a spirit, He doesn't need to sleep. If He's not asleep, then He's watching over us. He gives His angels, He commands them to watch over us and have charge over us; our well-being, our peace, our sleep, the way that we live our lives. What a wonderful thing to think about; the fact that our Heavenly Father is watching over us all the time. All the time. Hallelujah.

Well, before you sit down, I'd like you to welcome somebody that you don't know and also just tell them that "I'm glad you're in church today and you need to hear what's going to be said." Then say, "I need to hear what's going to be said." Then you may be seated. I need to hear what's going to be said. Yeah, you do definitely. Thank you.

Praise the Lord. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6 in the New Living Translation. Most of the scriptures I'm going to read today are from the New Living Translation. It's not often I do this, but just in context of what I'm going to minister, I just found that without going to too many different versions of scriptures, I can get a good representation of what the Lord wants to say.

Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, ⁶ **For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And He will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** ⁷ **His government and its peace will never end. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT)** It will never end.

Do you know that there are all the governments of the earth that currently exist that tell you how much power they've got? None of them will continue to exist forever. But the government of the Lord Jesus will live forever. Well, you know, if you're the government, if you're the governor of the government and you live forever, then your government will live forever. Dis maar so.

⁷ **He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen! (Isaiah 9:7 NLT)** Well, you can't enforce a government unless you have power to do it. This scripture says that the passion of the Lord of hosts' armies, the passionate commitment of the Lord of heaven's armies will make this happen. What are those armies? Well, they're certainly spiritual beings' armies. They're angelic hosts for sure. They are all manner of beings that God has created in the heavens. But we are also part of that army.

The passionate commitment of the armies. Come on. This is good news. People don't like to actually, people don't like to think of church or your place in the body of Christ as being part of an army. But unless you think like an army, you won't actually

make it as a Christian. Because much of what we have to do as a Christian is a conflict; it's a confrontation of ideologies, it's a confrontation of world views, it's a conflict of words, a direct opposition of words. Even if you don't go to war, you are at war. Even if you're not a Christian, you are at war. Yeah.

I'm happy to say that today I want to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus. Well, you might say, "This is not Christmas." Well, Christmas is not when Jesus was born. That might shock you. I'm glad it does. Christmas is not when Jesus was born. That was a pagan date set to celebrate Jesus. It's not when He was born. The fact that everybody celebrates His birth at Christmas is actually, it's just a ritual. It's an excuse to spend money and have a good time. But that's not when Jesus was born. So why can't we celebrate the birth of Jesus any time? Because if Jesus wasn't born, then Jesus couldn't die. If Jesus didn't die, then you and I would not be born again. So I can celebrate His birth anytime. Hallelujah.

Matthew chapter 1 verse 22. This is the New King James Version. ²² **So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:** ²³ **"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,"** which is translated, **"God with us."** ²⁴ **Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife,** ²⁵ **and did not know her,** he had no physical intimacy with her, **till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. (Matthew 1:24 NKJV)**

Well, what a glorious, glorious time that was, when Jesus was born into the earth. Can I get your agreement that we are all delighted, pleased, happy, probably very, words that don't describe what we mean in our hearts, but can we all agree that we are happy Jesus was born. Hey, what a time. I mean, when He was born, all of heaven was recognizing this moment in history, eternal history, eternal events. This was the big moment. If you want to take all of eternity, I reckon there's three big moments. There's still one more to come. But three big moments have occurred in eternity.

The one time was when Satan went against the will of God. The second time was when God made man, Adam, and Eve, and the third time was when Jesus came to the earth as part of the Godhead, but came to be human, and I include His death and resurrection in that whole thing. Three big events that happened in the earth. There's one more to come; that's when Jesus will come and we will rule and reign with Him forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. We as, the Church, will reign with Him forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. I don't care what your doctrine is, whether your doctrine is pre-tribulation, post-tribulation, mid-tribulation, no tribulation. I don't care whether you post-millennious, pre-millennious, no-millennious. I don't care whether you say Jesus is coming tomorrow or in a thousand years. I don't care what doctrine you hold and how you got to that doctrine. I know one thing, He's going to rule and reign in the heavens and on the earth for eternity with us, His Church, those who believe in Him. That is an undisputable prophesied, written, spoken by Jesus; fact. It's going to happen. That's a point to be celebrating about.

Because Jesus was born into the earth, you and I can be born and live forever. If you're born again, meaning you've had your first birth and then you've had your second birth where Jesus came to live in your heart. If you are born again, then you are in a place where you will never ever die. Because, you may live in a human body and think your whole world is around what happens in your human body, but actually everything that happens in your human body only is of value when you do it for Jesus; then it has both current and eternal value. That is scriptural. Those are also words that Jesus spoke.

So most people think that everything that happens in their life is about what happens in their human body, their human world, everything that's real and relevant to their human world, but actually; it's not. Everything that's real and relevant is about what your spirit man is called to do through your body. The real you, the spirit you and your soul will either go and live in heaven or it will live away from God for eternity. Otherwise known as hell or with the devil. One of two places. It's not going to go anywhere else. Praise the Lord. "Pastor John, why are you talking like this?" Well, let me see where I've put this other thing here. I might as well do it right now. It's also my birthday. And the dictionary definition of a birthday is; *The anniversary of the day on which a person was born. Typically treated as an occasion for celebration and the giving of gifts.* Praise the Lord.

Now, I've never been a sentimental birthday person. To me, birthdays are like, it's another day in my life. I live 364 days and then one day I must celebrate. You know, what are the other 364 days for? So I must now make one day more special than the other, and it's only more special because how many years ago I happened to have made a sound, and so now I must have this big celebration. So I've never been sentimental. I'm a fair realist about it, you know. But over the last number of years, and only my wife really knows how it's kind of been brewing in me. I'd say the last five or seven years. It's just like my birthday and other people's birthday, her birthday, and people around me, it's become kind of more valuable to me. I don't want to say I've become sentimental about it. I just say it's become more valuable to me. And I guess it's because of where the Lord has brought us as a church and the kind of ministry we're involved in, and what's happening to us as a church.

The more I think about it and the more I realise it is the significance of the day that I was born allowed God to use. He placed His gift in me, He placed a calling on me, and the day that I was born, I started a journey with Him of assignment, of vision, of calling, of purpose, of destiny. If I wasn't born, then none of those things could happen through me. God would have had someone else born that he could do that through but He chose to make me and place His Spirit in this body and make this something that would work for Him.

Every year that goes by, I feel like I want to celebrate that more. You know, it's like when people get older it's almost like, "Ugh, it's just another year, it's just another year, it's just another year. Don't remind me how many years I've lived and how many years I've got left." Well, I'm celebrating how many years I've lived because the years I've got left are going to be much more significant than the years I've lived.

That's why I've always said this, I don't believe that a born again Christian should ever have the word 'retirement' in their head. You may leave your corporate job, you

may leave a formal employment and receive the benefits of that, but you don't retire. Your gift, your calling, your assignment can never retire. The only time that goes away is when your body leaves the earth.

It's a good thing to celebrate. Yes? It's a good thing to celebrate birth. But I celebrate the birth of my Lord Jesus more than mine, but I celebrate my birth because... And look, it's not every year that I have a birthday so close to a Sunday so when I do, I can do this. Hopefully, next year will be on Sunday, like mine was yesterday, it will be on Sunday and then I can do this all over again. Amen.

Well, this is what's in my heart this year, so whatever God wants to do next year, that's His stuff, you know. But, yeah, I mean it's an amazing thing that God would choose to use a human being, any one of us, to get His Will done. It's His Will, it's His amazing, wondrous things of who He is, eternally, that He just says, "Oh, you beings made of clay, I'm going to use your clay vessel for the time that you breathe. Everything that I've put in you can function and create energy, can create momentum, can create light, can create breath, can create new things on the earth while you have breath. And if we cooperate together, everything you do while you have breath will breathe into eternity. But if you, in your clay vessel, choose to go against My Will, then I have to raise other clay vessels to do what you are called to do. And then you and I may not have anything to talk about in eternity." So, you know, we make a big fuss, we do, we make a big fuss about accumulation. Accumulation, potential, opportunity, we make a big fuss about that. But actually, all of it is just one step away in our breath with Jesus. Yeah. Praise the Lord.

Here's what's really needed is you really need to be persuaded in yourself, you need to be persuaded that you are a clay vessel in His hands, that you, yourself, are not that significant. You know, the more wealth people get, the more academically qualified they become, the more power that they accumulate on the earth politically or any other way, with fame or any other way that they get power. The more that that happens, the more they look at themselves as being something special. And the more they think how great they are and how great their achievements are compared to other people. Well, there's the whole thing, you're comparing to other people.

Well, if God has placed us on the earth to serve people, not compare, then everything changes. Everything changes. To be persuaded is something that only you can do with God for yourself. I can't persuade you. I can bring words to you. I can bring a message from God to you. There can be a strong move of the Holy Spirit in this place and His anointing can come and rest upon you, but still you have to choose to be persuaded. It's your choice to be persuaded. Why is it important for you to be persuaded? Because when you live out there in the world, away from church days like this, when you're out there, it's your persuasion that is going to sustain you. It's not your doctrine. It's not your doctrine. It's not your church today. It's your persuasion that is going to sustain you.

That's why people that want to speak against the Word of God that says, "You can speak words and words in your life will bring 30, 60 and 100 fold return of words." So, when I speak words, I receive a harvest of words. That's what that scripture says in Mark. You receive a harvest of words when you speak words. People speak against that as a message of Jesus and as a solid biblical way of living, a solid truth.

But they go out there and speak any words that they want to and then their lives get into chaos and they think I'm not reaping a harvest of my words. I'm just reaping a harvest of someone else's words or someone else's opinions or someone else's choices. So, then that's not a harvest. So, you go out there and you walk into everybody else's harvest. In the corporate world, in the sports world, everywhere else you go and bump into their harvest. Their harvest impacts you. So what harvest are you going to draw on?

If you don't know this, then you are not persuaded. I can't persuade you. You must persuade you. Now, I can live in faith; you can watch my faith in action and you can disagree with my doctrine. I want to tell you, I don't know if there's two people on the earth that 100% agree on the Bible, 100%. Two people. I don't think so. Not me and my wife. We might agree on 99.9, but there's not a 100% person that 100% agrees on 100% of the Bible. 100% of everything. Doesn't happen. Yeah. So, disagreement about doctrine is a given, but we can agree to live in faith with each other's faith and be persuaded by our faith walk. Come on. It's a part of the Body of Christ. When I see your determination to live for God, to live fully committed to His assignment for your life, His gifts, His callings, His abilities, His things that He's given you, I see you persuaded. I see you take it up. I see you live it. It is your faith in action. It is your faith that I can agree with. I can agree with it.

If I see you talking to someone else about Jesus and witnessing the Word to them, that's your faith in action. It doesn't matter to me what your doctrine is or what my doctrine is. If I see your faith in action preaching the Gospel, I can agree with your faith. Yes? I've had this happen before because I've lived a long time on the earth. I've done a lot of leading people to the Lord who have been out there. And I've been around and I've watched people lead people to Christ thinking, "How did these people even get saved with those kind of things that were done?" How they were said, the attitude, the way it was done. Hey, I've witnessed this. I've witnessed a drunk Christian lead another drunk person to Jesus. I've seen it happen because a drunk person's spirit is still born again. And they can't help it in the moment, their spirit man speaks past their drunken stupor. If the other person is ready to receive the words of life, they can give their hearts to Jesus and it can last forever. I've seen it happen to drug addicts, to drunk people, to all kinds of people. And I think, "How in the world did that get saved? Because my doctrine, blows my doctrine out of the water." Yes? But I can agree with the faith of what's happening. I don't have to agree with that person's doctrine. Hallelujah.

I am persuaded that living in faith is the way to live with God because it's my trust in Him. Isn't it? The other thing I've got to be persuaded about is I have to be persuaded that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. I have to be persuaded of that. I have to be persuaded that He doesn't change. I have to live for that. Because if I can't live for that, then I'm going to be swayed by circumstances and the ways of men as we change. The ways of men change, all the manner of things in life change, they change, they change, they change. If I'm persuaded that Jesus isn't changing, then He's always going to be the same to me no matter what's changing around me. I can be persuaded of that faith. I can watch someone else's faith, pulling on the life and the love of Jesus regardless of what's happening around us. Can't you? Hallelujah.

I mean, isn't that what happened to Joseph? Joseph was visited by an angel and said, "Your wife is going to have a child and you must look after her, take care of her and be a good husband to her." And he's like, "What man has slept with her?" "No man has slept with her. The Spirit of the Lord has come upon her and she's going to have a child by God." This kind of change has never happened in human history. This kind of thing hasn't ever been here before. "Joseph, I'm meeting with you like this so that you would be persuaded. Because when I leave this room, you will know that God encountered you and you now have to live by your persuasion, not by the ongoing presence of the angel that's going to visit you all day every day for the rest of your wife's life." You have to be persuaded. Hey?

What is the primary, number one thing the devil wants to do? He wants to undermine your persuasion, your conviction, your commitment to purpose, your commitment to the will of God for you. That He birthed you out of heaven into this body and He said, "I've given you everything that you need to be significant on the earth." "Oh no, I can't find significance in me. I've got to find significance in wealth. I've got to find significance in degrees. I've got to find significance in political positioning. I've got to find significance in networking." If you try to find your significance in other things, then you are not looking to the Source that made you. The reason you were born, your birthday, the reason you were born wasn't so that you can pursue money or power or prestige or fame. It was so that you could pursue His will. His will. His will.

We are born to pursue Him. We are born to live for Him. We are born to be dedicated to Him. Everything comes into order in our lives when we pursue Him, when we are persuaded in our pursuit and our pursuit is a result of our persuasion. I'm teaching really good today. Hallelujah.

If you didn't know it, all of that is in my notes. People ask me, "Don't you have notes?" I have an outline of notes and then I preach it as the Lord brings it out of my spirit. It's full in me.

John chapter 15 verse seven in the New Living Translation. Just bear with me, will you? Scripture says, ⁷ **But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!** What does it say? You may ask. **You may ask for anything you want, and it *may* be granted! It *will* be granted. (John 15:7 NLT)**

[Pastor John talking to Pastor Sharon] What's going on, babe? You okay? Well, come. Get a microphone and come.

Pastor Sharon:
Pastor John,

Pastor John:
Yes.

Pastor Sharon:
The most unexpected thing happened to me while I was sitting there.

Pastor John:

I saw it.

Pastor Sharon:

The Lord said, "I have a gift. I have a gift for Pastor John today. I have a gift. I have a gift." Where are those three boys? Elsie, come. Come. Come with the three boys. Elsie, you're their granny and the Lord is pleased. I said that to you, but the three boys, here in order of age. No, just stand, and face Pastor John. Here, here and here.

Here they are, John. Here they are. The firstborn, tell Pastor John your name. "Luande." Yes, tell Pastor John your name. "Mandi." Tell Pastor John your name. "Niamah." 15, 10, and 7. The Lord said to me, "Bring them up to Pastor John. Let him bless them and let his..." because the granny is in this church and the granny brings them.

Pastor John:

I know her.

Pastor Sharon:

Yes. That you would bless them and dedicate them today to Him and receive them to yourself and take them as a gift.

Pastor John:

Okay. I will be obedient to the Lord.

Pastor Sharon:

Thank you.

Pastor John:

Give me your hands. Lord, I thank You for these wonderful young men and how You have brought them here, to save their lives. I'm aware of what tribulations they have been through and that You have brought them here to save their future. We receive them into this ministry. We receive them into our lives. We receive them with all their gifts, with all their callings that You have birthed them in this earth to fulfill.

We receive them today and I bless their gifts, their callings, and all of the energy and all of the things that they have. I receive them. I bless them. And I ask you, Father, that us, as a church, we already have a responsibility to take care of them and we will continue all, to play our part to do this. And that as they choose to be part of our Body, that they will grow here, they will be strong here, and they will be... and fulfill all that they are called to do. In Jesus' name. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pastor Sharon:

In Jesus' name.

Pastor John:

Amen. Hallelujah.

Pastor Sharon:

Come hug. Let Pastor John hug you. Just like... let him hold you close.

Pastor Sharon:
He will be... Fifteen, hey? Yes, fifteen and ten, my darling, and seven - brothers.

Pastor John:
Yeah.

Pastor Sharon:
Brothers.

Pastor John to the grandma:
Has he been to school?

Elsie:
Yes

Pastor John:
Is he still in school?

Elsie:
[Nods yes.]

Pastor John:
Hey? At school.

Elsie:
At school.

Pastor John:
Are you strong? Are you sure?

Luande:
Yes

Pastor John to Pastor Sharon:
Thank you my darling.

Pastor Sharon:
Thank you. Thank you.

Pastor John:
Hallelujah.

Pastor Sharon:
Praise the Lord.

Pastor John:
Hallelujah.

Well, you know, that's the living example of it right there. That's how God... unintended intervention in the service. But I saw the Holy Spirit come upon Pastor Sharon, and I know her. She wouldn't interrupt me if it wasn't the Holy Spirit interrupting her. But this is how the Father works with us. We can be going about our lives, but the minute you come and you bring yourself to God, the Father, He receives you into His eternity, into His plans and purposes. And He says, "Now come, let's work together." Now, they can take it on themselves to worry about what they need for the future, or they could just leave it to the Father, meaning us. All of us.

If we watch over them to take care for them, for them to reach what they need to reach and the others that are here too. Then the Heavenly Father says, "I'm involved." Because Pastor Sharon doesn't know the scripture that I'm reading. ⁷ **"But if you remain in Me and My Words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want and it will be granted."** ⁸ **"When you produce much fruit you are My true disciples. This brings glory to My Father."** This brings glory to My Father. ⁹ **"I have loved you, even as the Father has loved Me. Remain in My love."** ¹⁰ **"When you obey My commandments, you remain in My love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in His love."** ¹¹ **"I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"** (John 15:7-11 NLT) The Lord wants us to celebrate birth today, birth today. There's not too many places where you want to celebrate birth. Everybody wants to remove birth, even before birth happens. But we must celebrate birth. Hallelujah.

Well, Ernest and the little girls are not here right now. But that's how, I mean they're not in the service right now, they were here earlier, but that's how Ernest came to be in my life. Him and his brother, Patrick, were wandering around the streets. So, we brought them into our lives. We brought them into our home. We cared for them and we raised them. We don't know exactly how old Ernest is, right now, we know more or less because his father and the people that actually knew about him being born, they died before we could find out when he was exactly born. So, we just chose a date to celebrate his birthday. Amen. Hallelujah. Okay, okay. Seems like other information has come but that is how we lived our lives for a long time. Like that.

What a thing that Ernest, and if any of you have touched Ernest's life, what a rich person is Ernest? What an amazing person is he to be amongst us? What would have happened if Ernest wasn't born and Ernest didn't meet us and it wasn't in God's plan to have someone that could take care of them? Because from the day they met us, they never had to worry about whether they were going to live anymore. We took care of Ernest and Patrick until they were adults. Patrick chose to do his own thing, walk away from God and do other things and which is why he's not really part of our world. But we still loved him and wherever we can we still brought him back into the fold and loved him and served him and helped him wherever we can and whenever he's been in serious trouble, we've tried to help him but choices have consequences. But Ernest didn't. Ernest stayed with God, stayed with us. He's never had to worry about anything in his life because his adoptive father took care of him. His adopted father and mother. I want to say, God arranged an adoption. And today these young boys are adopted into our family and into this ministry. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Praise Jesus.

When you get adopted into the Kingdom of God, do you think you've got anything to worry about financially? Do you think you've got anything to worry about in your future? No. If you abide in His words and His words abide in you, you can ask anything you want and He will grant it. Why? Because it's all about the abiding of the words. Why do you think the devil and religion fought so hard against what they called the 'name it and claim it' people? You know, this whole thing of 'name it and claim it.' Some of you don't even know what I'm talking about but the message that we have been living for almost all of our lives, it was so resistant because people say, "Oh, you're just the prosperity bunch. You're just the 'name it and claim it' bunch." No, if they understood that I name what I'm claiming as my healing, it's the same process.

When the Lord spoke to me about how to live with my wife in marriage, His first thing was, "Don't get into strife" and "Speak words over her that are My words over her, not what your anger or your frustration or your irritation says. Speak words of life over her." And so for years I had to speak that way, even though she didn't immediately understand what I was doing or receive all of what I was doing. But if we believe that 30, 60 and 100 fold words return to you as harvest, then it was inevitable that if I'm persuaded, those words will return to me in harvest. This beautiful woman I've been married to for 43 years, she's my harvest of words. Our marriage is a harvest of words, persuaded words, not just words, I am persuaded by living in Him. I'm persuaded He's Lord, I'm persuaded He's God, I'm persuaded that His words are the ways and words of life. It doesn't matter what circumstances we face, if we will keep putting His Word to those circumstances, those circumstances will change. They will change. They will change. Hallelujah. That's why we sing the song, *Everything is subject to change.*

¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other. ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it. (John 15:17-18 NIV) That's why Christians that are loved by the world are not behaving as Christians. They're just behaving as the world because they want to be loved by the world because somehow they've been persuaded that the world has the answers. Because they look at the world's ways and they say, "That's where the money is, that's where the profit is, that's where all the stuff is. I've got to go and be in the world so that I can receive what the world has." Well, Jesus prayed a prayer and He asked the Father not to take us out of the world, but to protect us from the evil one.

Being in the world is not a problem, it's the evil that's in the world that's the problem. It is interesting though, that the scripture also says that the love of money is the root of all evil. So that's been the big contest in the church. You can't have too much money in the church because it's going to be evil, you're bringing evil to yourself. No, I love God, He provides and gives the money so I don't have evil with it.

I have no affiliation to money, it's a tool. I don't love it and I don't hate it. It's just a tool, the more I've got, the more I can do. And if I've got it and the Lord says, "Give it away," I do. I have. We have. And if He tells us to do whatever He wants us to do again, we will. So, **²³ Anyone who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I hadn't done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, they have seen everything I did, yet they still**

hate me and my Father. You know, people say about the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, “If only there would be signs and miracles and great anointing services, it would change the view of the world.” That’s not true. Jesus came and did miracles on the earth and they hated Him anyway. This fulfills what is written in the scriptures, *they hated me without a cause*. They don’t need a cause to hate you, they don’t need a cause to hate Jesus. They hated Him because He is the life and they don’t like the fact that they have got to bow their will to the Will of Jesus. So they don’t want to bow their will, so because they don’t want to bow their will, they hate Jesus. Because He bowed His Will to the complete Will of the Father. He said, “Now come, let My Words abide in you because it will help your will to bow to the Will of God. Without My Words abiding in you, you cannot bow.” Let me tell you what you can’t do. You can’t defeat bad thoughts with good thoughts. You can only defeat bad thoughts with the Word of God. And if you try to take control of your mind with another mind control position, you’re just going to be full of mind stuff, and then you will be mindful about yourself.

The way to change what’s in your mind is to say, “I’m not going to think that and I’m going to speak what God says.” If you just say I’m not going to think that it’s going to keep coming back, and then you’re going to get into the fight of but how do I stop keeping this thought from coming back all the time? Now I’m going to change my thinking. That’s all about your will trying to defeat your will. If you could have done that Jesus wouldn’t have died. *Magtig man, dis goeie preek vanoggend. Magtig. Beter as wat julle Amen sê.*

So you can’t beat thoughts with other thoughts. You got to take it captive and then you got to abide in the Word of God, you got to live in the Word of God, you got to speak the Word of God and you got to start putting things out there that say this is the way that I live. I live by the words of God and by His will that are relected in His Words. That shows that you are persuaded. Hallelujah.

If you want some meaningful progress in your life, get persuaded and speak words of life. In case you didn’t have all the answers. ²⁶ **“But I will send to you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.** If you got any wonder about it the Holy Spirit is going to keep telling you about Jesus. Who is Jesus? The Word. So He is going to keep telling you the words that Jesus lived and Jesus spoke and the Holy Spirit is going to keep reminding you about His Words. ²⁷ **And you must also testify about me.** What are you testifying about? His Words. **You have been with me from the beginning of my ministry (John 15:26-27 NLT).** ¹ **“I have told you these things so that you won’t abandon your faith.** I don’t know that it can be any simpler than that. ¹ **“I have told you these things so that you won’t abandon your faith (John 16:1 NLT).**

Well, why is faith so important? Well, stop breathing and let’s see how long you live for. Faith is the oxygen of your spirit man life. Faith is the oxygen of your spirit man life. Anybody to say that you, “Why are you making a big deal of faith?” Because faith is what you live by. So if you are full of oxygen, life goes good. So how do you get the oxygen of the Word? You have got to speak it and speak it and meditate on it and meditate on it and speak it. Isn’t it a surprise to you? That I have been persecuted for this doctrine? It was a surprise to me too. It was, it was a surprise to

me. Because everything I'm telling you is in the Bible. I'm not saying anything that's not in the Bible. Amen. Hallelujah. But it's all been worth it. Amen. Hallelujah.

It's all been worth it because in those tests and all the persecution that has come my way, I've learnt a lot of things and I've become stronger. It is a true thing. That doesn't kill you, makes you stronger. It is certainly true in spiritual terms. Because if the devil tries to take you out and you use the Word of God as your armour, you get stronger. He's got to hit you with bigger and bigger weapons all the time to try and take you out. Every time the weapon hits you and you say, ah, that's a big one, that's a big one, that's a big one, they get bigger and bigger and bigger. You say, after a while you begin to realise, he can't, he hasn't got enough weapon. Because in the end he's got to come against Jesus, the shield of faith. He's got to get past the shield of faith. He can't. He's got not enough guns. He's got not enough nuclear weapon. He's got nothing. We are the nuclear guys.

I celebrate. I celebrate with you today that you died. I celebrate with you that you are born again. I celebrate with you that you die every day. Because every day you are a new person. You didn't expect that, hey? I've got 10 minutes left. ²³ **"If anyone desires to come after Me, Luke 9, 23; let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,** do you desire to save your life? "I've got to save myself. I've got to save myself." You can put anything after that sentence. I've got to save myself. In what? Anything that's a big deal in your life. Write it there. I've got to save myself. No one else is going to take care of me but me. Well, in that way, you're right. You better take care of yourself. But if you live like that, you're going to lose your life.

²⁴ ...**but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world,** this is everything you can write behind your name now, **he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words,** it's not just Me, it's Me and My words, **of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:23-26 NKJV)**

Wow. Well, we better get about speaking His words. So, you know, you can take that passage of Scripture and you can narrowly look at it and say, "This is about preaching the message of salvation." Well, He doesn't say that. The Scripture doesn't say that. It goes to everything that we live by. Yes, it is about when people question you, about are you a Christian and what you believe, or you have an opportunity to declare it. You should be willing to go there. If you're not, you can change it. You can change your desire by speaking words, so your desire comes in line with words. "Father, I thank You that I have the desire to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ wherever I go. I'm ready in any season. I'm ready everywhere I go. I'm ready any moment, any time, to be someone who brings Good News. The name of Jesus, the Gospel, I'm ready to bring it."

I want to read this to you from another version, another part of the Bible. It's in Matthew. ²⁶ **For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange,** in exchange, what will a man give in exchange, **for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of**

His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Matthew 16:26-27 NKJV)

This talks about callings, about giftings, about your assignment, the stuff you were born for. Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Let me tell you, the devil is so clever at this, that he's never gonna come to you and say, "Give me your soul, give me your soul, in exchange I'll give you fame." He's done it to a few people. He tried to do it with Jesus. There are a few people that have had real life experiences with a demon or a devil or a man that was parading as a spirit being.

Prince was one of them, I think. Who's the guy that, I know Lady Gaga was one of them, but the guy that sang, *We Will Rock You*? What was his name? [*Congregation answers, Freddie Mercury.*] Freddie Mercury had that encounter. And he sold his soul for music, to be famous in music. There are many people that have had been approached by beings and then their lives have been captured for fame. But he's much more subtle than that. He says, "Why don't you chase security of finances in your life? Chase it. Well, because everybody else is doing it." Because the reason they're doing it is because it's the only way to do it.

That means you and I are not persuaded that what He says in His Word is the Truth. Because if we understand the power of abiding in Him with words and our words abide in our lives, His words, our words are the same words, then we can ask anything we want and He'll grant it. And many people get bent out of shape. He is only gonna give you what you need. When His Words abide in you, you will know what words to ask for because His Words are abiding in you. Why get bent out of shape what is want or what is need. Rather focus on the other part of the scripture – get His Words in you, abide in them and let's see what comes out of your spirit that's full of life.

We get so caught up in the intellectual argument about wants and needs and how much is a want and how much is a need and does God really meet your wants... It is all about the abiding, it's not about the answer to the question. Because when you abide you don't need to ask the question. Because He leads you to ask. Praise the Lord.

The Passion Translation says it like this from Luke chapter nine. ²³ **Jesus said to all of His followers, "if you truly desire to be my disciple, embrace my cross. Embrace My cross. You see what I did there? Embrace My cross as your own. I just skipped a few words. Embrace my cross as your own, and surrender to my ways. (Luke 9:23 TPT)** Here's where most Christians have the problem. *Surrender.* "Don't challenge my will. My will is my will, my ways are my ways, don't challenge my surrender."

We tend to do this. I am not, I'm not criticizing anybody for it. I have done that myself, but I have to speak the truth as the highest standard, no matter where we are on the spectrum. Are you with me? I am not judging you, or putting a heavy on you here today. We've all done this. But we tend to do this. We tend to creep up slowly on surrender because, because we are not truly persuaded. So, we give ourselves latitude to be persuaded.

But in the meantime, we don't realise that actually we're causing so much chaos and hardship for ourselves. Because the longer we take to be surrendered, the more we have to deal with our self-will that doesn't want to be surrendered. The longer you deal with your will that has to be surrendered, you persuade yourself that you don't have to do surrender, because look what I can do without surrender - look what I can do without surrender. Look how great I am, and I can work the system and I don't have to surrender. I promise you; you can go and look at everybody's life, that hasn't given all they have to the Lord and you can see it is the surrender thing. I am not persuaded, so I am not surrendering.

²⁴ But if you choose self-sacrifice, giving up your life for my glory, you will embark on a discovery of more and more true life. If you choose to keep your lives for yourselves, you will lose what you try to keep. (Luke 9:24 TPT) Oh, but if you go and talk to the billionaires, they won't agree with you. There is a scripture in the Bible that says wealth is a defence. So, wealth can be a defence.

Make no mistake, wealth can be a defense. But what are you defending yourself against? There are things you can defend yourself against and then things you can't defend against. You can't defend yourself against the lack of peace. You can't defend yourself against no joy. I don't care how many billions you got. You can't defend yourself if you live a life that suddenly feels you are hopeless and you have no assignment and you have no value and you look at your wealth and you say, "but at least I've got that." But you also know, pretty soon I'm going to die, and then none of that is coming with me. And now you are in a dilemma because you have given your whole wealth to non-surrender, because look what I can do by my self-will. But now your whole will has been this whole life. You can't defend yourself against that.

So **²⁵ Even if you gained all the wealth and power of this world, and all the things it could offer you, yet lost your soul in the process, what good is that? (Luke 9:25 TPT)** You could say that you only lose your soul when you die. I differ. I think you lose your soul all the time you are gaining the wealth and power. Because whatever you are doing to get it, you are busy losing your soul. You will be identifying with whatever it takes to get it. Then Jesus got to come along and help you undo it. The good news is, He is amazing, He redeems empty hours, He redeems your life and He redeems your time. But the longer it goes, the more surrender it takes.

I'm here to celebrate with you today, you and me, this ministry. I'm here to celebrate with you today, that you were born. I'm here to celebrate with you that you are taking up your cross daily, and you are dying, and every day you are becoming more born again. Every day you are becoming more like Christ because you are saying, "I am laying down my life so that I can win it, I can gain it, I can increase it." I'm here to celebrate with you that this ministry has made a decision. We have all collectively made a decision. We are going to lay down our lives so we can live it. And the more we lay our lives down and we live it with Jesus, the more we are going to get more life, gain more life, lead our life in a better and better and better and better way. Hallelujah. Praise Jesus.

I just want to make sure that I haven't...I'm just going to read it to you a little bit from The Message Translation.

Then he told them what they could expect for themselves. Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. Jesus. You're not in the driver's seat, I am.

Hey, do you know how cool it is if you are going on a long journey, and you have got a driver who never sleeps? He is always awake and anticipates anything and everything that happens before it happens. In fact, the driver even knows if there is a flat tyre busy happening and you can't see it. He has got his own tyre pressure management system. He's got His own radiator monitoring system. He's got His own oxygen management system. He's Jesus, He's the Holy Spirit, take a seat in the passenger seat and say, "Drive me, Jesus. Take me where you want me to go, I'm following."

You're not in the driver's seat, I am. Don't run from suffering. Embrace it. (Luke 9:23-27 MSG) What suffering is this? "I don't feel like dying today." Celebrate it, die. I want to refer to my old nature in this way. I'm not purposely trying to use bad language, but I want to say die, little bugger, die. Sometimes it's a big bugger too, you know, but die. Thank you, Pastor Sharon. It's a good day to die. Today's a good day to die. Go ahead, make my day. **Follow me and I'll show you how.** Do you see how important it is to speak words of God? Because He gets to show us how.

Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way to finding yourself, your true self. In other words, you put yourself, say, I'm ready to die. **What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you?** What point is it if you lose you? "Oh, okay, I'm safe and secure with money." So, all right, now I'm ready to do whatever I need to do.

So what's preventing you in the first place? "Fear that I don't have enough money or lack of responsibility that I don't have enough money." Do you think God can't meet your needs? Obviously, you do. Obviously, you do. Here's the good news for us, is that all of us have chosen to celebrate. Celebrate life. We have chosen to die. Hey, let me tell you, every day you and I wake up, we have to make a choice that today we're gonna die. Today we're gonna die. But I don't wake up with death on my mind. Do you? I don't, I don't wake up with death on my mind. I wake up with life on my mind. I wake up with, "I'm gaining something today. I'm gaining something today. I'm receiving something today. God's giving me something today." What is it that you're getting? The words that abide in me and My words, His words that abide in me, and I'm abiding in Him. They are flowing out of my spirit and as they flow they reveal His desire for me and for you. Every day I'm gaining some new insight as to what His desire is for me, and when I speak it out, He begins to grant it.

I wake up with a granting mentality every day. Hey, come on. He redeems time. He redeems empty hours. He redeems our life. He redeemed your life before the foundation of the earth was born, because He knew that you wouldn't be able to follow the law. He knew that in yourself you would always follow yourself, and the world system would draw you into that self-living. He said, "I'm going to let Jesus come and die for you. I'm going to put My Word to work in you, and then when you understand that you can ask Me anything you want, and I'll give it to you." So let's get to the business of celebrating Jesus!

When you speak Jesus' Words every day you are celebrating choice. You are celebrating life. You are celebrating grants. If I wanted to grant you some big thing, say, "What is it that you want?" You'll find out. God did this with me recently. Until it's manifest, I'm not going to talk about it. I mean it's busy happening as I speak. But the Lord said to me, "John ask me something." He introduced the conversation. Pastor Sharon witnessed the whole thing. He introduced the conversation to me. He said, "I want you to ask Me something that's impossible for you to get." And He said, "It's not ministry, and it's not about someone else, this is about you, just you. This is for you, this is about you, this is about you and Me. Ask Me something that's impossible for you to get."

I had to think about it. He said, "Something you want, something that I can help you with, something that I can get for you that you can't get." I said, "Well, that's quite a question." And it's not ministry. So this wasn't about, "Ask Me for a bigger church building, or ask Me for a thousand souls" or whatever. It wasn't about that, it was about Him and me - for me. And so it took me a couple of days to get to what it is. So I went to Him and I said, "Well, Lord, if this is what You're asking me, then this is what I want to do." He said, "Ask it." I said, "I'm asking for it." He said, "Go for it." I said, "But it's not possible." He said, "Go for it."

So it involved some administration and it involved sending emails and receiving emails back, and involved in a process, a human related process, in order to get the ball rolling. Within about a week, what is impossible became possible. It became possible so quickly that when I read the outcome to Pastor Sharon, she said, "No, you've misread the email. They didn't say that." I said, "No, they did too." And then I conferred, they sent me another letter. I had to respond to that letter and they sent me another letter and then they plainly stated it. "You got what you're asking for." She said, "I can't believe it." I said, "I can't believe it either because this is impossible. This just doesn't happen."

Here's the big thing about it is that God began to show me that when you are in Him and He's in you and you are living and abiding with Him like that, you can ask whatever you want and He'll grant it. And when He puts the desire in your heart, He begins to say, "Ask Me for that, ask Me for that, ask Me for that, ask Me for that." "But Lord, why would I even want to do that?" "Because I love you. Because I want to show you that I can give you what you can't get for yourself. You don't even have to use your faithfulness. Your faith is in Me and I see your faith living in Me and with Me and for Me. So ask it and I'll show you I can give it to you and you don't even have to ask for it. I'm giving you the desire to ask for it." And by the way, it's not money because I know how to get money. I sow it. I know how to get money. I sow it, I give it away and then it comes back. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Praise Jesus.

Guess what? You're in that same boat. The more you live in Him and the more you live in His Words; celebration time. Celebration time. Celebration time. Hallelujah. By the way, it's also not material possessions. I didn't ask Him for any thing. I didn't ask Him for a thing. That wasn't what I wanted to have in my walk with God. I wanted Him to show me because I know how to get stuff. Stuff is so little, really. Anybody can get stuff. This thing was something impossible. It required favour. It required a reversal of policies and trends and all manner of things. It required a complete reversal and only God could facilitate that. Hallelujah.

Here's the good news for you. In time to come, you're going to celebrate that with me and you're going to remember back to this birthday conversation you're going to say, "Yes, now we see, Pastor John. Now we know, Pastor John. That conversation you had with God, that's what happened." Then you're going to not just celebrate with me, you're going to celebrate life with me because He is the life that makes all things happen.

That's why I celebrate your life with you today because when you are dying to yourself, you are resurrecting your future. You are resurrecting your assignment. You are resurrecting your vision. I want you to celebrate my birthday today with cakes and cookies and all *lekker* stuff out there. I want you to celebrate. When you celebrate with me, my birthday, say, "I'm celebrating me. I'm celebrating us. I'm celebrating a future full of vision, full of assignment, full of new things because today is a birthday." It's all of our birthdays. It's a new day to be birthed into new assignments, new things, and yes, I'm dying so that I can be born into new stuff. Day by day, moment by moment, week by week. This is time for us to get unstuck and to be stuck to Him. Hallelujah. Glory to Jesus. Stand to your feet, please.

Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus for what You've done in this service today. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for bringing wonderful young people. They've been here for a couple of weeks now but thank You for bringing these young people and making them part of us today. Hallelujah. Glory to Jesus. Glory to Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Glory to God.

Put your hand on your heart. No, don't put your heart anywhere, just put your hand on your heart. Say, "I'm a son of God. Jesus is my Lord, I live in Him, I abide in Him and His Words abide in me. I thank You, Lord from today I walk in new things. I'm going to celebrate life even through death, I celebrate life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You understand when you are like, "Agge no man, ag this Christian thing, this church thing, that pastor, it was so nice when he preached it but now it's Monday morning and I've already got a call from my boss and they are already hitting me on the back and they're doing all kinds of stuff and where was that pastor now?" You say, "Hey, celebration time. I don't take those thoughts. I speak life. Everything that's happening here is going to turn out to my good, it's going to turn out in my favour. He is going to turn all these bad things turn into my certain good. I praise Him, I glorify Him. His Words are in me. Therefore, that thing must change to His Words. How long is this going to take? If you look at your circumstances, this is really good for you. So give me a minute. This is really good.

If you look at your circumstances and you then say, "These words are not working on my circumstances," then you're about to allow death to be your go-to. Because you're about to take yourself out of the passenger seat and put yourself in the driver's seat. You've got to be persuaded that what He said He would do and what's working in you will come to pass. That's faith. Be persuaded. Amen.

I pray that this week will be full of blessings, full of increase, full of the glory of God, full of celebration this week. Celebrate the fact that you are born again. Celebrate that you have a whole new way of living that the whole world doesn't even know

about and you're living it to the fullest. If you don't feel like it, speak it anyway, it's coming to pass. I'm a Christian living the full life, the high life, the shepherd of God kind of life. He's gonna prepare a table for me in the presence of all of the enemy stuff and I'm going to live in the House of the Lord forever. I'm gonna enjoy and enjoy the house of the Lord forever. Hallelujah. Glory to the name of Jesus. Glory to the name of Jesus.

You are protected and blessed, going out and coming in and no weapon formed against you will prosper because the Heavenly Father and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, They don't sleep and neither do the angels. He's watching over you. He's taking care of you. Tell Him that. Thank Him for it. You know, thank Him for it. When you wake up in the morning, "Thank You, Lord, You take care of me and everything of that is mine today." Hey, if you are persuaded that those words work, it will work. Hallelujah. Praise the name of Jesus.

I'd like you to bear Pastor Sharon and I in prayer this week. This afternoon, Pastor Christi is going to do message moments because I am going with my blood-born family, just for an afternoon and evening, to go and spend some family time to celebrate me. I've already celebrated with my blood-bought family and the blood-bought family that has given me a gift. I got a wonderful gift. See, God knows what I need more than you even realize. Maybe next week I'll show you what the gift is. You know, the people around that are close to me, I didn't even know it was gonna happen. I arrived here on Friday and they presented me with a prezi, *'n lekker prezi*. But then Pastor Sharon and I are going to go away for a couple of days just her and me and we're gonna celebrate me. She's going to make sure I get celebrated. Hallelujah.

You know, isn't it amazing that this thing that's happening for us to go away for a couple of days has just been planned some time ago but I mean, isn't it amazing that the revelation that God's given us and where we are at now with all of the things that God's perfect timing is involved in everything. We said to each other last night, you know how amazing it is gonna be to have these few days where we can just share the word, we can pray together, we can speak life and speak the future and assignment to each other and all of my blood-born kids have got to go home. Stay away. This is us. So we're going to a place where you can't phone us either. No signal there. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Please enjoy cake and coffee outside. Thank you, bless you. Bye y'all. Thank you, thank you. And Pastor G is going to do prayer on Tuesday night. Pastor Christi is doing message moments this afternoon. Amen. Bye julle.