

28 January 2024

Crossover Part 25: Kingdom and Ecclesia Economics

Pastor John Bendixen (WTB)

**Scripture references: Colossians 1:9-14 (MSG); Colossians 1:12-13 (TPT); Matthew 6:33 (TPT); Matthew 6:32-34 (MSG); Matthew 6:33 (AMPC); Matthew 12:29 (AMPC); Ephesians 6:10-20 (MSG);**

Pastor Sharon:

Father, we thank You for Your Word that comes to us now through Pastor John. Oh, we're so ready for Your message, ready to hear Your words, Lord. Our hearts oh, does it, do not our hearts burn within us as You open up the scriptures to us and You break the bread of life with us. Do not our hearts burn within us, yes, they do, Father. And we are here expecting Your anointing upon, Your Spirit upon in an increased measure, and Your Spirit within, Pastor John. He speaks with boldness, he speaks with boldness, Your boldness, all the things that he must say so that You, Father, can have Your way, in Jesus' name and we all say, amen. Thank you, wonderful music ministry. Oh, praise the Lord.

Pastor John:

Thank you. Praise Jesus. Hallelujah. Church is a good place to be, I mean; you are the church. There's no doubt about that but when we all come together, then that's a great place to be, is when we are all together. Ja neh. Amen. So, I'd like you just to tell somebody you are the church and I'm glad you came to the church today. And then you may be seated. Praise the Lord. After the service today, we will be having water baptism. We had so many people request water baptism that we are going to have to do another one. Is it next week, Miranda? Because, too many people on a given day, there's just too many people and it just runs late, and so we have to do it over two Sundays. Praise the Lord for that. Amen.

Amen. Then this coming Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock, we are having a men's gathering. I've called it *Men of the Moment. Men of the Moment*. So, whoever wears the pants in the house, girls, genetically you're not allowed. Amen. These are for biological men, not for those who identify as men. Amen. And I'm not trying to be politically correct either. Praise the Lord. It's a good day.

I also would like you to just make a note of this date. It's a very unusual date. Ahh, I reckon we will be finalizing arrangements this coming week in the next couple of days but please mark Wednesday, the 12th of March, I think it is. Help me here Miranda. Is it Wednesday the 13th of March? Wednesday the 13th of March. There is every likelihood I want to say at this point in time, there's a 90% possibility that we will have a guest, a special guest speaker here at the Church in Witbank. And we will make it as early as possible in the evening. We are going to try and make the service start at six o'clock so that ah, people who need to go back to Johannesburg and so on.

We're trying to have a balance here of people that want to come from Johannesburg and people that have to go back to Johannesburg and the speaker themselves they have a whole different engagement the next morning in Pretoria. So, we have to try and strike a balance of all things that need to be accomplished. So I am trying to give you, I mean these things happened this last week and the last couple of days. So I am giving you as much warning as I could possibly give you, but I suspect we will really have a wonderful, wonderful time. Amen!

It gives me real joy and privilege to make the following announcement. But I want to say that, a family arrived at my Church probably twenty-two years ago, I think it's twenty-two years ago. And I have had a journey of twenty-two years with the family, and so it's my privilege that we are entering into the next phase of the next generation of family things that are happening. And yesterday a young man proposed to a young woman. Luke proposed to

Ester, and we want to congratulate them this morning, come on guys stand up. *[Church clapping hands.]* Thank you guys.

So, I just want to say one or two things about it. And that is that, God has been part of this all along. There has never been a moment in this time where they haven't included the spiritual leaders of this Church. Not a single moment, not a single activity, not a single anything where they haven't included us, sought our counsel and we have advised them. And sometimes, I know, they have been frustrated because hey, when you're feeling strongly about somebody you want things to happen quickly. Don't look at me like that. But in the spiritual order of God it is powerful that when you do things right in the beginning then God accelerates it in the Spirit. When He accelerates it in the spirit, in the natural that acceleration begins to become evident. So it's a wonderful thing that they have followed the order of God and the will of God. Yeah. I look forward to what God's got for the next generation under the order of God. Amen. Praise the Lord.

So to that extent, I segue into my message. I just want to make sure my timer is right here. Is it possible, is it possible for humans to live as humans without spiritual influence? At all? It's not possible. It's not possible for human beings to live on this earth without spiritual influence.

I'm not going to talk about the masses of humanity. I'm not going to talk, today, about philosophies and all kinds of ideologies and all sorts of mental thoughts that have come from many different sources over years; books that have been written, religious movements that have been started, philosophies that governments run their governments by. It's not my place today to talk about those things. So, just bear with me if I narrow our conversation down to just Christians. But I am aware, very much aware, that all of humanity is impacted by this. There is not a human being that is born into the earth that declares themselves to be human that is not impacted or influenced by some spiritual force.

It's quite clear, it doesn't matter which religion you look at or which religion you talk about or talk to people about their religion; every religion will tell you there's a dark side to life and to humanity and there's a light side. All religions and philosophies in the world will always try and persuade people of their thought process, their ideologies, their philosophies that they are the light side rather than the dark side.

But it's impossible for humans to be born and live on the earth without spiritual influence. Whatever they term it, there is a spiritual influence. So if you're a Christian, then we know, without a shadow of a doubt, we know that the only—the only God that has come to the earth died for the people, then was risen again for the people, and then gave the gift of life eternally to the same people is Jesus Christ. There is no other religion that talks like that. There is no other religion or philosophy or ideology that can point to a leader like that; a source of life like that. So if I was to just bring you a compelling argument today in just in the form of an argument, then I would argue that on that basis alone, Christianity should be the highest level of investigation for your future. Right?

So if we, if we consider that the Bible, the Bible is our source of the way we live, then this has got to be our primary guide in the way that we live. Yes? This is not just a guide. This is not just a secondary guide. This is not just one source of guidance. This is the source of guidance. This is the source, and if this is the source of guidance, then we must take this source of guidance seriously and we have got to, we've got to give it proper attention. I would introduce a subject today that over weeks to come, we will talk more about this, and we will talk more about priorities, because if we are crossing over, then, some things become a higher priority to you than others. Amen.

So, if we are Christians then we become very much aware that Jesus is the light, Jesus is the life, and He is the future of everything. He's love, life, and light. It's what the source tells us. Yeah. So at the end of the day, if you don't believe this, then I have to say, "Well, what do you believe?" Because whatever you believe is what you will give your highest priority to. You will give your attention to it, you will give all of your resources to it, you will give all of your future to whatever you believe most. It will be your priority, and so if you want to dispute that to me, I dare you to go and make a diary and start writing down what you do with your time, your energy, and your resources in a week and a month and then as you evaluate what you write there as accurately as you can write there, then that will show you what you believe most. Uh-huh. It's a bit quiet in this Pentecostal church here this morning.

Over the last couple of weeks, if you follow Crossover Moments with me every morning, you will know that I've been talking about the Kingdom of God. And Crossover is all about the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of light, the kingdom of darkness. And, I've been talking about kingdom economics and ecclesia economics, and still going to be talking about that today. Amen.

So I will be taking an offering at the end of this message because we are taking an offering every Sunday. Now, we haven't been doing that for some time, but I believe this is God wanting to multiply us going forward. So I've been reading a scripture in Colossians 1 verse 13, but I'm going to read the Message Translation to you now, and I'm going to start from verse 11, and it reads like this, <sup>9</sup>... **We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul - not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us. (Colossians 1:9-12 MSG)**

Will you just say this with me? "Strong enough". Strong enough means that you have enough strength to do what you need to do. And so that scripture says, that He "... **who makes us strong enough to take part in everything ...**" The previous verse - the previous verse says, "... **but the glory-strength ...**" - there's glory-strength and we become strong enough.

And here's the scripture I've been using on Crossover Moments. <sup>13</sup> **God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He's set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much,** and verse 14 says, <sup>14</sup> ... **the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating. (Colossians 1:13-14 MSG)** It's just a fact that if you're a human being, if you're a human being and you're living on this earth, there is always going to be a contest for your energy, for your thoughts, for your words, for your actions. There's going to be a contest.

Your thoughts, your words, and your actions demonstrate your worship. Your thoughts, your words, your actions demonstrate your worship. What you speak about, what you think about, and then the actions that you take from your thinking and your speaking, it demonstrates your worship. If I can put it a different way, whatever you prioritise and what you give your energy, will indicate where your love is, and what you love is what you worship.

This is not complicated. This is quite simple. And if we are in a contest, then we are always going to be challenged to make choices and without Jesus we would always make the wrong one. This is why that Scripture says, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in got rid of the sins we're doomed to keep repeating. Now, you know, when we talk about sins, many people will say, "But I'm not a big sinner. I mean, actually, I live quite a good life. I'm a clean person. I live a healthy life, I live a good life, my life is in pretty much in order."

Well, there was a young man that came to Jesus and told Him the same story. He said, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus started talking to him about keeping the commandments. And then the young man replied to Jesus and he said, "These I have kept since my youth." And then Jesus says, "You only lack one thing," and I've told you this many times before. If Jesus could stand in front of you and say, "You only lack one thing in your life." That's a pretty good thing. He said, "You only lack one thing. Take all of your possessions, sell them, take your money, give it to the poor, come follow Me." And the young man turned away from Jesus very saddened because he had much possessions.

So, what was Jesus demonstrating to him? His sin wasn't in his moralistic behavior. His sin was in the love of his money. The sin was in the love of his security. The sin was in the love of the future of what that provided for him and the status it gave him in life. So, the sin wasn't a sin of extrovert lifestyle of stealing, killing, murdering, doing all kinds of bad things. The sin was he never really gave his heart to God.

It was okay to discipline his lifestyle, but when it came to his heart, God didn't have his heart. Now some people would say, "Well, that's not a sin." God says so. Jesus said so. When He was talking to the people about money He said, "Hey. You can make one of two choices. You can serve God or you can serve money. You can't love them and serve them both at the same time. You're either going to love one and hate the other." He didn't give any place for a middle-ground road. Right? Jesus' words.

Go read it for yourself. Matthew, chapter 6, read the whole chapter. It's all there. He didn't give people a choice as to, "Hey. Let's have a middle-of-the-road here. I can love You, God. I'll now live a good life and show that I live life by the good values of a good Christian and I'll live my whole life as a good Christian with good values, but I also want to do my best at acquiring as much wealth and as much money because I love to do that too." God says, uh-uh. The human being cannot do that. Why not? Why was Jesus making a distinction? Because there's a contest in the Spirit realm of darkness and light. There's a contest for everybody's future. Amen. Praise the Lord.

That's why, what these young people- all the young people in the ministry here, what they are doing is such a powerful thing. Because right in the early years of their life, they are admitting to a contest and in the admission of a contest they say, "We're making a choice. We're choosing light. We're choosing Jesus. We're choosing the life of God." This is a powerful thing. When they give their worship, God gives them all the abundance of life they could ever wish to have. Amen.

You guys are quiet this morning. I know, I know you have to keep your mouth closed while you're eating. I know we say that always, but you know, amen is really good. *[Congregation: Amen.]* There you go.

In those scriptures in the Passion Translation, and this is the version I've been using in morning Crossover moments, but I want to read verse 11 and 12 to you also. **11 And we pray that you would be energized with all his explosive power.** I'm talking a little bit about strength and being strong and power this morning. **With all His explosive Power from the realm of his magnificent glory, filling you with great hope.** Hey. When you know Jesus, your life is filled with hope. Let me tell you that hope in opportunity is a very short lived hope because opportunities can be shut like that. *[Pastor John snaps his fingers.]*

Can I tell you that most of the world is living their lives to maximise opportunities. And so they also go and get an education with the belief that the education will preserve them from lost opportunities. So that, if there's everybody loses their opportunities, those that are the best educated and have the most valuable form of education, will never lose opportunity. I've got news for you. If your hope is in that level of opportunity, it is in yourself and your own

ideology, and your own philosophy about who provides for you, who gives you the health, who gives you the strength, and what system you're following? If you trust in Jesus and you trust in the opportunities He gives you, there is no end to it. Those kind of opportunities cannot be ripped away from you because whatever Jesus gives you, He protects. He protects. Hallelujah.

What better protection do you want than what Jesus gives you? Because if you're in His will, then He protects you. <sup>12</sup> **Your hearts can soar with joyful gratitude when you think of how God made you worthy to receive the glorious inheritance freely given to us by living in the light.** <sup>13</sup> **He has rescued us completely from the tyrannical rule of darkness and translated us into the kingdom realm of His beloved Son. (Colossians 1:12-13 TPT)**

I've been teaching in morning Crossover Moments. Crossover morning moments I've been teaching about anything that's in darkness is tyrannical because the tyranny comes from the one who operates in that darkness. But anything that's in the light, there's no tyranny about it. There's only choices. Hallelujah. I made a note here somewhere. I just want to find my note.

In weeks to come, we'll talk about choices and what you pursue and the difference between pursuit of choices versus striving with your self-strength. We'll talk about the difference and how that has a material impact in economics. Now I just want to say again, if you haven't been part of the church for a long time and you hear one message, you might think this is all this church does, is preach about money, and you all here will know that's not the truth, but at this moment in time, we are talking about money and I'm not ashamed of that. People might say, "Well, you know, preachers shouldn't preach about money." Well, then I shouldn't preach about anything that people are human about. Because people, if I don't talk about what's important to people's lives, then what am I going to talk about? What, why was the Bible written then? The Bible was written to give answers to everything about our life, not just one or two selective matters. Right? Amen.

So Matthew chapter 6 verse 33. Again, this has been one of our foundation scriptures. From The Passion Translation. It reads like this, <sup>33</sup> **So above all, constantly chase after the realm of God's kingdom and the righteousness that proceeds from Him, then all these less important things will be given to you abundantly. (Matthew 6:33 TPT)** Now all of Matthew chapter 6 is talking about what you're going to eat, what you're going to wear, what you're going to drink, and where you're going to live. The whole of Matthew chapter 6 is about material possessions and Jesus is saying here, if you... So, if you <sup>33</sup>...**constantly chase after the realm of God's kingdom and righteousness that proceeds from Him, then all these less important things will be added to you.**

And we've been talking for some weeks now that actually, everything that everybody's chasing so importantly after is less important in the kingdom. And God is so determined for us to follow Him that He's saying when you follow Him, the less... "The things that everybody thinks is so important, it's actually so little importance to Me."

Well, of course, He's the ultimate provider. He's our heavenly Father. He has said other places in the Scriptures in the gospels, He says, "If you, as a good earthly father, know what good gifts you're supposed to give to your children, how much more does the heavenly Father who loves us more than any natural father could ever love us, how much more will He give us all the good things we need?"

The trouble is that you know, we live in our senses. And so unless you can touch something and feel something and think it's in your natural world, then you are not sure if you can trust it that much, but that's the whole thing about God is He wants us to trust Him more than we

can trust what we touch, see or feel. He's more real than your senses. "Well, I'm not so sure, Pastor John." Well, would you have senses without him? Did He not make you?

So if He made you, then He knows what your senses are, and He says, "Trust Me more than you trust your senses." Yeah, I'm preaching good, hey? I'm preaching good. *Magtag*. I'd like to read verses chapter 6 verse 32 to 34 for you out of The Message translation. **People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things**, what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, what you're going to wear, where you're going to live. **People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things**, Come on. Isn't that what anybody will tell you, that's what life's all about.

Get ahead. Get ahead. Get ahead of the need. Store so you get ahead of the need. The more you can store, the more you can have a gap between what you need and what and getting ahead. Right? So the further you can get ahead, the further you can remove yourself from your absolute everyday need, the more security you have. People are fussing about that all of their lives. **But you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.** By who? By the Father. <sup>34</sup> **Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes. (Matthew 6:32-34 MSG)**

Yeah, that's too much for my brain. I know, that's why I'm not talking to your brain. Because it's too much for your brain to take this in. I'm talking to your spirit. Because if these words of life go to your spirit, they can work there. It can grow there. And then, when it's grown up in your spirit, it will come into your soul and your consciousness and a revelation will come to you and suddenly you find yourself trusting God. Because that's how life comes to you. His seed is word of life.

The Amplified Bible puts that verse like this, <sup>33</sup> **But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness.** The Amplified Classic says, **(His way of doing and being right).** So if God's ways are of doing are right, then what are the other ways? Are they not wrong? **And then all these things taken together will be given you besides. (Matthew 6:33 AMPC)**

Wow, you know, sometimes I've been, I've been accused of this and I'm happy to be accused of it. I can take it. *Gooi dit*. I have been accused that I'm sometimes too radical. You know, too radical. I'm too, too strong in what I preach and teach. And I don't even leave kind of any margin for humanity. Well, there's a reason why God had me preach a message some time ago, that we have to live with messy to get to marvellous, because every one of us has got messy in our lives. Everyone.

You know, if we have to sit down and have an honest conversation with ourselves, and we had to use this word and say what's messy in my life? You might find it hard to find out, what's messy. Because actually, if you start to admit messy to yourself who knows where you might end up? So most people are not willing to sit down and become honest about what's messy. Because then suddenly, your list can start growing beyond what you just intuitively don't want to come into your consciousness and make choices to live the way you want to live. And so I'm not going to deal with my messy and I don't think it's that messy anyway, because actually my life is quite okay. I's quite good. It's all right. I'm living quite comfortable. I don't want to deal with messy. Well, if you don't deal with messy you can't actually get to marvellous living. Hey. So where is marvellous living? Marvellous living is not in what I'm going to drink, what I'm going to wear, where I'm going to live and how many cars I'm going to get. Right? Well, everybody else in the world thinks that's marvellous living.

They count their money by how many shares they own in big Blue chip companies, they count their money by how many holiday homes they've got. Maybe they have a jet or 5. Maybe, who knows- the whole world is all about measuring. It's about measuring.

But when we come and say, "Hey, let's measure and let's have an honest chat about messy," they won't say that there's too much messy in their lives. They'll just say, "This is normal life. This is what happens in life. Everybody does these things. Everybody gets to this point in their lives." But God says, "Hey, wait a minute. If you come and live My way, you're going to crossover from messy to marvellous. From messy to marvellous."

Okay. So I'm going to go back to what I was talking about right in the beginning of the message. Is it possible for any human being to live just as a human without any spiritual intervention? Without any spiritual influence? So if we are honest with ourselves and we go and read the Bible and we find out what the Bible says about humanity and about spiritual forces that are impacting humanity. Well, we're going to find out for sure that there's a darkness, there's an evil force, there's an anti-God force. Anti-God. So that's why when I started to teach some months ago maybe now already, and I talked about blessings and cursings, I didn't want to talk so much about cursing and I rephrased the word "curse" as anti-blessing. Because the dark force, the evil force that's on the earth is anti-God. And so if you're anti-God then you're anti-everything God stands for.

So if you're anti-everything God stands for then your anti-blessing, your anti-life, your anti-goodness of God, your anti-everything that God is. It's darkness. It's death. It's destruction. The Bible says, Jesus said, "I did not come to condemn the world but to give the world life. And I've come to give the world life more abundantly. But there's another one who's in the world. He has come to steal, to kill, and to destroy, he's the anti-God force. He's the anti-God force." Hallelujah.

So I'm going to be a little bit radical now. Yeah? Going to be a little bit radical now. Do you think your age dictates what you do? So if you're 25, or you're 65 or you're 85, does your age dictate what you do? Only if you let it. Only if you let it. So, out there the world says, "This has become the norm of life now – this has become the norm of life. *You can't have a family unless you have a house, unless you have cars, unless you have a job, unless you have all of that, you can't have a family.*" So, this is a statistical fact that people around the world are not getting married anymore because they can't 'afford' to.

Yeah? So, what are they doing? Relationally what are they doing? They are getting out of relationships what they want to get out of relationships without getting married. So, they're going out with each other. They're going home to an apartment or something. They'll sleep with each other. They'll have sex with each other. They'll build a relationship and, and they'll live with each other and there won't be ... there'll be this unspoken thing we're together until the sex is no longer good or until something else happens, then they'll separate and move on to the next one. And so that's become normal. Is that God's way? That's not God's way. So then if that's the normal in life, what is the normal in life going to lead to? Death, destruction and the devil's going to steal your future.

So, what if we go God's way and we say, "God, we want Your best in relationships, we want Your best in the way that You guide us and lead us in Your best way." So, anybody that's on the side of *go out with whatever - have many relationships, and actually the more you have before you try and settle down, the better it is because you'll know what you like and what you don't like.* Come on. Isn't this a world philosophy and ideology? Yes. Isn't that right? So, they say, that's the best way to live. Really? That's not the way God says to live.

God says, "Hey, let's do it according to My Word." What's going to be there in Your word - in God's word? Life abundantly. Life with more joy, life with more goodness, life with all peace.

Hallelujah. So, what about money then? Well, how does this apply to money? Well, over here those same people that are doing those same things in relationship, they say *you got to pursue a career. You got to get educated. You got to pursue a career. You got to climb the corporate ladder or you got to try and start a job, and you've got to try and get as much and go and work as hard as you can and make as much money as you can as quickly as you can so you can live the rest of your life.* The problem is that because God's not in that, it consumes you. God says, "That's not My way of doing things. My way of doing things is over here. Seek Me first. Put Me first. Come and give Me your time. Give Me your energy."

So, some people will say, "You want to pray in the morning before you go to work? You want to praise God before you go to work? When you're at work, you want to walk around at work and praise God and quote scriptures under your breath and be walking around mumbling around and people ask you what are you talking about?" "No, I'm just praying." "You pray at work?" "Well, what else do you want to do?" "Well, talk to other people. Don't pray." "Well, what must I say to other people?" "We want to talk about what they did last night." Come on. I'm being practical here.

Some of the most significant breakthroughs I had in my life when I was in the corporate world was when I was so focused on getting free, using God's Word, that I would mumble the Word of God, mumble His scriptures under my breath while I was walking down the passages. And I worked in an open plan office and as you progressed in senior management, you would have a small cubicle when you were just a normal average working person. And then as you got promoted, you'd get a bigger cubicle, and then your cubicle moved to the windows. And then if you got more promoted, then your cubicle became a corner cubicle. And then if you got more senior, maybe you had glass around there because, you know, you have to have private conversations. It was the world I grew up in anyway.

So, you know, I mean, I would be walking around open plan offices, little cubicles with all things, and I'm walking down the passage. Because I was a senior manager, everybody wants to get my opinion, talk to me about something. "Thank You, Jesus, [*Pastor John starts praying in tongues*]. Thank You, Lord, for blessing all of these people that work with me. Their turnover, their performance, their success is going to feed me. Thank You, Lord. You bless them. Bless the work of their hands. Bless the opportunities. Bless what they do. Bless them, Lord". And then someone was, "What are you saying? What are you saying? What are you saying?" "Don't worry about it. What do you want to talk about?" And they would get used to me walking around down the passage mumbling, mumbling.

I don't want to get too graphic here, but I used to go into the bathroom and do what men do, standing there mumbling. And then people come in, they see me mumbling, "What's going on there?" Come on. It's a bit of humour.

You know, but that's how we have to live our lives. Wherever you're going, whatever you're doing, whatever you've... "Hey. Let's mumble what the kingdom says. Let's talk the Word of God. Let's talk the words of life." Or I can just go about talking about all other stuff that everybody else is talking about doing, then I'm going to end up thinking what they think, talking what they talk, and then I end up doing what they do. So, why don't I rather think what God thinks, talk what God talks, then I end up doing what He does? Come on. This is not a complicated equation.

"So are you saying, Pastor John, that the whole war of light and dark is measured in your thoughts, and your words, and what you do?" Yes. If I preached nothing else, we got there today. Everything we're about, there is a spiritual force that's contesting for your thoughts, for your words and for your actions. Everything is a contest. Don't kid yourself that you can just live a normal human life and say, "Ah, it doesn't matter." Let me tell you what was such a big deal about December and December's crossover, let me tell you. Because if you think

anybody says, "This is the time of the year that I deserve to go to the beach and lie on the beach and read a novel and eat my ice cream and drink my cold drinks and do that day after day because I earned it, and I deserved it for the whole year." This is what you're saying, don't fight me now. This is what you're saying, "God, I'll give you my whole year, but these 2 or 3 weeks in my year that doesn't belong to You, that's mine. So when I'm in that time of the year, I'm going to think what I like, I'm going to say what I like, and I'm going to behave how I want."

So when God came to talk to us about December and January and saying, "It's crossover time. Give your time to Him." He was being very urgent about there are things that are going to happen in 2024 that none of us know yet. And if you are not ready in your spirit, then you're not going to know how to deal with it. "Pastor John, you're just fear-mongering." No. I'm not. God is always going to prepare His people for something that's coming down the line before it comes. Always. Always. He's never going to let His kids face a situation that He hasn't prepared them for. Never.

When I was in the military, you know, we spent, out of the 2 years that I was in the military, we spent a whole year training. I mean, I wanted it that way because the normal infantry people, they had 3 months maximum training. They had basics and then they had 6 weeks of conventional war training and some guerrilla war training and then after 3 months, they were gone and they end up being in the border for 18 months or more, those years. Anyway, the unit that I was privileged to be part of, we had a whole year's worth of training. Here was the difference. Those other troops that got training, they had a week for something, we had a month or more. Where they had a couple of days, we would have a month or more. We were trained in the art of walking through thick bushes with little details, little details that the other guys didn't get.

I'm going to just give you one. I might have given you this example before, but I can just give you one. When you're walking through the bush, you got your backpack on and you're walking because you don't know how long you're going to stay there, and you're walking through the bush and you step over a tree or you step over something that's an obstacle in your path. If you're a right-handed person that has a right-handed rifle, you're walking like this. *[Pastor John is making as if he is holding the rifle with his right hand on the grip near the trigger and the left hand on the barrel with the barrel facing left]*. If you're a left-handed person, you're walking like this. *[Pastor John is making as if he is holding the rifle with his left hand on the grip near the trigger and his right hand on the barrel with the barrel facing right]*. You with me?

So, if I'm a right-handed person and I'm walking like this and I'm walking through the bush. What is the most likely foot that I'm going to use? Remember I'm right-handed. Which is the most likely foot am I going to use to step over an obstacle? My right. Yes. If I'm in a moment where that is my compromising moment, how do I get to turn that way? *[Pastor John is showing he is holding the rifle facing left and now he wants to turn it to the right, while his right foot is in front which makes it difficult.]* Come on. This becomes difficult. I'm compromised. If something happens on my right, I can't get there. "Oh, Pastor John, that's such a small thing, such a little detail." We were trained that when you see an obstacle, you might want to pause a little bit. See what's going on around you. Take in the environment. Why is there an obstacle? What's leading you to this obstacle? When you do cross that obstacle, you lead with your least likely foot, which would be your left foot because this way, I can go any way. *[Pastor John is showing how he can turn from left to right with his rifle when his left foot is in front]*.

Just a little thing and some people say, "You mean you were trained with that level of attention to detail?" In my unit, we were. So, what do you think generally happened as a matter of percentage casualties in our unit? Much, much less because what we were taught

is it just looks like a natural obstacle in front of you. It's just a fallen down tree. But why are you heading towards a fallen down tree? Who's behind you? Who's ahead of you? What's on the sides of you? You got to stay switched on because now this is a matter of life and death. You're in enemy territory. This is their environment. You mean you were taught with that level of detail. I was.

Do you know how much energy you spend? You got 40 kilograms on your back. It's normally always hot when you trained like that, and you're always always having to pay attention. "Shut up and leave me alone, man. I want to go and lie under a tree and drink some water." "No. No. No." "We are making you do this again and again and again and again." "But I don't see the point in this. You're just making me walk across along with a different foot." "Yeah." But when it counts, you're not going to think about which foot you're just going to know which foot you're going to take. And when it counts, and you haven't got time to think it's going to become second nature.

What I'm endeavouring to do to teach you as a spiritual leader in your lives, is to teach you that your second nature becomes your first nature. That is not your logic and your reason and your reality that consumes your actions. It's the Word of God that is so full inside of you, that it's your thinking, it's your believing, it's your words, it's your actions that just - all the time, all the time all the time I'm making adjustments all the time. Hallelujah. Praise Jesus.

Okay, this is my last Scripture today. Remember Ephesians chapter 6. I'm going to read from verse 10, from the Message translation. When we come back next week, I'm going to read to you from Matthew chapter 12. And it reads in Matthew chapter .... don't put it on the Scripture go to Ephesians 6 but Matthew chapter 12 verse 29 says, <sup>29</sup> **How can a person go into a strong man's house and carry off his goods without first binding the strong man? Then indeed, he may plunder his house. (Matthew 12:29 AMPC)** I want to tell you, that you are strong if you're a Christian, but what the devil wants to do is he wants to bind you so that he can steal your life. How is he going to bind you? Make you think, make you speak and make you act the way he wants you to do, not the way God wants you to do.

So, with that in mind, I read Ephesians to you. Ephesians 6 verse 10. <sup>10</sup> **And that about wraps it up.** In the Message translation. **God is strong and He wants you strong.** <sup>11</sup> **So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the devil throws your way.** What's he going to throw your way? Thoughts. He's going to make you want to speak and he's going to want to make you act in line with your thoughts and your words and then if he's got you there, then he's got you bound. But God says you are strong in Him.

<sup>12</sup> **This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the devil and all his angels. (Ephesians 6:10-12 MSG)** There is no way that you can say humans can live in life and live without spiritual forces. That doesn't exist. All of humanity, it doesn't matter whether they believe in Jesus or they believe in some other gods, there is a spiritual force that is dictating their future. Whether they believe it or they don't believe it. It's the truth. The Word of God says it.

<sup>13-18</sup> **Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an *indispensable* weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.**

<sup>19-20</sup> **And don't forget to pray for me. Pray that I'll know what to say and have the courage to say it at the right time, telling the mystery to one and all, the Message that I, jailbird preacher that I am, am responsible for getting out. (Ephesians 6:13-20 MSG)**

Well, I'm not yet a jailbird preacher but if I was to be put into jail for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be my privilege and it would be my honour to do so because I would be standing for the truth. Can you see that actually what you prioritise becomes important because what is your priority is what you will pursue? This is a whole lot better than having a striving mentality, striving for stuff. Hey. Hey, *julle mense*?

Well, Pastor John, how is it possible? How is it possible that we can live this life? How is it possible that we can live this life? Only living in God's word? Well, I'll tell you. It doesn't matter what activities you're doing. If activities have the foundation of scripture, thinking, words, and actions, then God will begin to reveal to you what your life must look like. Amen.

So, when I'm going to be talking to the men next week, *Men of the moment*, I want to tell you men that and you will know this church. I have such a great honour for the marriage relationship and for the unity of families that the men in this church will know that I haven't had a men's meeting for years because you know, I don't think that in general terms I've not had this attitude, well, men needed a special kind of attention because they are a special unique sort of species. I know that some women think that. But we are not some kind of special species and that's why many ministries have women's meetings because men say, "I don't understand a woman. They are definitely a special species." Well, not in this church. That's not my declaration. My declaration has always been, I understand this woman [*Ps. John is pointing to Ps. Sharon.*] 100%. There is nothing about her, my wife for 43 years, there's nothing about her that is a mystery to me.

Well, that means you don't have very interesting things happen in your life. You don't know how much interesting things have happened in my life. Because she doesn't have to be a person that I don't know about to have wonderful things happen to me. On the contrary, the better I know her, the better she knows me, the greater our unity and the greater our intimacy. Praise the Lord.

So if I have it on my heart to address men, you all know that and I mentioned it to you a couple of weeks ago. The Holy Spirit came upon me all over me and said, "John, I want you to have a men's meeting." And I haven't got a full download of what that's going to do or what it's going to be like, but I'm just obeying the Holy Spirit. So come ready, prepared, and let's do and be ready for whatever God's going to do. Amen.

Hallelujah. I I told men a long time ago in my church, I mean, I'm talking 15 years ago. I said, "Hey, men, I'm not going to come and say let's have a get together and we'll try and talk about, you know, sex issues or pornography issues or we're going to talk about money matters or we're going to." I said, "In our church, you don't have to be worried that I'm ever going to come and talk about stuff like that and make you feel, is he going to talk about something that's going to make me feel guilty?" I don't do that. Well, Pastor John, why not?

Because that's not the way the Holy Spirit leads this gift. If there are other gifts out there that do that, I'm not going to judge that, but that's not how He leads this gift. Amen. So when you come here it means the Lord's got a word for you men. I have an idea what it is, but I'm yet to receive the fullness of what it's going to look like. Amen. Praise the Lord. Did you get something out of this this morning? I even done preached myself happy. Because you know what, hey, everything that we think, say, or do, it's our choices. And if we choose it, we can change everything.

A thing came to me and I went and looked it up, and then I watched a video, a YouTube thing. You know there's a man out there. He's a 109 years old. He's broken so many world records, partly because there is no one in his age category to compete with him. But at a 109 years old, he gets on a bicycle, and he enters races, and he competes at a 109 years old. And so they asked him, "So, well, what do you put your the secret of your long life to? Have you been cycling your whole life?" "No." He says, "I started cycling when I was 69 or something, 65 or something." "You mean you that's when you started cycling?" "Yeah, when I was 65." And he started breaking records.

Hey. I'm 63 and I'm doing something dramatic with my life. Amen? And I want to tell you, this is just the beginning. Amen. Because when I change my thoughts about it and my words about it, then age is not a relevance. It's energy. It's what I perceive as my future can be all about. It's what God shows me I can accomplish. So all you youngsters, watch out. I just got started. Come on, stand with me everybody. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

What time does the baptism start? 12 o'clock. 12 o'clock, we're going to please be at the the venue by 12 o'clock and then we'll go from there. Oh, yeah. And there's no message moments this afternoon because baptism is going to take a couple of hours and so. Ahh... *[Pastor John says in a sad tone of voice.]* Praise the Lord. Won't you take your right hand, put it on your heart like this, and just make this declaration and say, "Lord, I commit to have control over my thoughts. Control my words. And control my actions. And I declare Lord, in Jesus' Name, that I get all my strength from You. And all the control that I need, is from Your Word, from Your life, from Your light. I take it, I receive it, I live it, in Jesus' name. Amen."

Won't you be seated please because we have to take up an offering. Amen. It is wonderful to take up an offering. I mean to give God some money, ha! Glory to God! He just keeps pouring... Please go ahead and take up the offering and then I want to pray over it. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. God is good, hey? God is good. God is good. God is good.

There's many, many good things happening, I'll tell you. So many good things happening. I mean, God is doing so much for us and with us and around us that everywhere I look I just see the hand of God, I see His blessing, I see His favour, I see the increase, I see just stuff is happening all the time. It's happening so good it's making my head spin. Hallelujah. Yeah, that's a good thing to say, you know. Some guys will say, "Hey, that girl, she looks so good she made my head spin." I'll tell you what, my God is so good He makes my head spin. I really like to say that about the Lord; He makes my head spin. Just trying to keep up with all of His blessings and all of His favour and all the good things. It makes my head spin. Oh, it's happening there. Oh no, it's happening there. And there, and there. *[Pastor John looking from left to right]* Shew! Okay, Lord, okay, Lord. Praise the Lord.

I reckon even if you are riding a bicycle and you get a flat puncher, maybe God is protecting you from something. Yeah, I went home and thought about that yesterday afternoon and I thought it doesn't matter what happens in my life, nothing is by coincidence. I was joking about that yesterday, but nothing happens without coincidence. God is always taking care of us in some form. He is always doing something good for us, amen.

Won't you stand with me, please? Just stretch out your hand here. Thank You, Lord, for the wonderful, wonderful opportunity to sow our energy, our skill, and our daily life in the form of money into Your hands. And we present it to You and we say; multiply, multiply, multiply. And in return, we say thank You, Father, that we don't even have to ask You for anything, You just multiply everything in our lives because we follow You, we seek You and we go after all that You have for us. So, we thank You and praise You for multiplying our resources, our resources for sowing, our resources for eating and our resources for doing good. We thank You for it, Lord, in Jesus' name. And all of you said? Amen. Thank you for coming to church. Bye. Hey, Willie, it's good to see you, brother.