

# Matthew 19:13-30 | Tom Grass

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Preacher: Tom Grass

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day.

! It's good to be back together in person in Iowa. One of the guys speaking spoke of, I believe he was in Peru, serving the Lord and as missionary, and he continues to do that. But there was a conference, and one of the brothers came from a neighboring village or tribe downstream from where they were having a conference, and the man by himself in a boat canoed upstream three days to go to a conference to hear the word of God and be with the brothers. And he expressed it this way, and it's a great word picture, being in the jungles, paddling, saying, I've got to meet with the brethren, I've got to meet with the brethren. And the way the speaker, he was very enthusiastic, said those words, and it's very convicting that other parts of the world, like even Kevin alluded to it this morning, and Pakistan, and places in the world where it's a real challenge together with the saints, and it's life-threatening. And they do it all the time, and they will sacrifice all to follow you. And they go to prison, they get tortured, some get murdered, some families are broken up over it, so many things, mutilated, whatever. And here it's so kind of cushiony and easy. So that's challenging, it's convicting. And as we look at your word this morning, Lord, I'm going to be a little direct in some of the things I say, a little challenging, especially to the young parents. And I pray that that would be received with grace. Another thing that stood out when we were in Iowa is that they emphasized the first meeting, the breaking of bread, the remembrance meeting, as the most important meeting of the week. And the meeting Sunday school and family Bible hour, Bible study, whatever is secondary to that. That is quite a challenge. They challenge their young ones, or new members, or whatever, or people that don't fellowship regularly to take four weeks and commit themselves to showing up at the breaking of bread and see how they feel or believe at that point and see if there's a, if it becomes a significant thing in their life and if they value it. So as we look at your word today, we're just admonished to do what your word says, regardless of how we feel. And, you know, we see in this passage where, who has forsaken all to follow Christ? And that's quite a challenge when you think about it. So we ask you to open up our eyes and, yeah, help the speaker to deliver what you want him to say. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. We are in Matthew 19. We're going to look at Matthew 19. We're also going to look at Matthew chapter 1. And then we'll be looking at some other verses throughout the Bible, a variety of them.

With love, respect, concern, take the challenge I present to you, especially if you are a parent of young children today. I'm going to get in your face a little bit. I learned over the years that you say what the scripture says, and it's up to the individual hearing it, whether they obey it and follow it or not. It's not up to me or you to make another person live up to it or own it for themselves. I challenge you as we get into this a little bit that you take these words seriously and consider it.

[ 4 : 47 ] Yeah. I was thinking last week, Ted talked about marriage and divorce. And I kind of, I'm going to paraphrase a Brian Regan joke. I didn't hear it at the concert or his event the other night. This is from years ago that I heard. And so Brian Regan was playing golf with a buddy and he got home and his wife and him are talking. And this is, shows you the difference between men and women. And the man that Brian, Brian Regan golfed with, allegedly, you know, whatever, this is a comedy routine. He said, had just gone through a divorce, you know. And so Brian Regan's wife says, so I don't know the guy's name. How's Phil doing? How's Pete doing? And Brian Regan says to his wife, oh, he's fine.

You know, guys, right? Are you okay with that? End of conversation. Well, but how's he doing, you know? Is he dating anyone or anything like that? I go, I don't know. You know, right, guys? He got a new driver. You know, and well, what about, you know, the marriage, the divorce, all that? I go, wow, we didn't talk about it. You were with him for four hours and you didn't talk to him about it.

It's like, no, I didn't, you know, and if you're a guy in the room, you can relate to that, right? It's just kind of, it's true, right? I mean, hey, how's so-and-so? How's his child? They had a baby. How's the baby?

I don't know. I don't know. Call them and ask. I don't know. Anyway, I thought that was kind of funny, you know. By the way, just an aside, OH. Yeah, man, those Buckeyes, man. You want to watch a good football team. Watch them beat Notre Dame in a couple weeks. That'll be fun. Anyway, so here we go.

Let's dive in. What is a Pharisee? They come up in this section of Scripture. What's the difference between a Pharisee and a Sadducee? The Sadducees aren't in this text, but if you want to remember something, Pharisees were strict adherence to the law and the commandments and the oral teachings that they overlaid the law with and say you adhere to these things, you can achieve eternal life.

[ 7 : 12 ] There is an X number of commands besides just the law, 600 and something that they said you should follow, right? The Sadducees, the difference between them is they didn't believe in the spiritual side of life after death, the resurrection. They're sad, you see, because they don't believe in the resurrection.

It's a really good, easy way to remember it. So if you hear them when they come up, you'll see the Apostle Paul, if you read in his, when he senses that there's two groups there, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, you know, if you're debating family, right, or close people, the best thing to do is change the argument so they start fighting each other, then they turn from you, right? You never break up, if you worked at the winery and there was a wedding, you never got in the middle of, when a fight broke out because they had too much alcohol, you never got in the middle of the family fighting, right? Because what would they do? You are fighting, now you're doing something to my brother, now they're both on you, you know? I had that happen to me when I worked at the winery. I was like, okay, here we go, I'm going to break this up. And it was two guys, or two women is worse, but bridesmaid and a bride, I've seen that. But you know, if you, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, so that's the difference is the Pharisees would be strict adherents to the law.

So as you see this rich young ruler come to Jesus, what's his question? What must I do to have eternal life? That's a very reasonable question for that era. And the Pharisees also taught that if you adhered to the law and were faithful, that God would bless you in this world, in this lifetime, with riches and things like that. And wealth at that time was considered to be an indication possibly that you were one who God honored and cherished and blessed because of your obedience to his commands and laws. So that's kind of a little bit of background to what's going on here. This is about three weeks before Jesus goes into Jerusalem. So it's the end of his ministry, public ministry. We see a phrase in here, only God is good, good teacher, rabbi. And he says, why do you call me good?

Maybe that's in this passage or that's another passage too. And who is good? The Bible teaches, or we'll look at this too, there is none good, no, not one. Only God is good. Only God is perfect.

[ 9 : 51 ] So when Jesus encounters this guy and the indication is good, it's Jesus challenges him. Do you believe I am good? Do you believe I'm God? Do you believe I'm the Messiah? Then do what I say. Look at my disciples who have been following me for these three years and do what they've been doing if you believe that I am truly he, right? You think, you want to be my disciple? Be like Peter and the other 12, you know, the other 11 in that case. So we're going to look at marriage a little bit. There's marriage, divorce, children, wealth, salvation, and rewards. These are all kind of things that come up in this chapter. There's no way to cover all that, right? In 20 minutes or so. I'm going to focus more on children as we get to the later part of the message. And so let's dive in. I think if you go back to Matthew chapter 1, and Ted did a good job last week talking about marriage and divorce and that whole thing there in the beginning of chapter 19. But if you turn back to Matthew chapter 1, I thought this was kind of interesting that the birth of Jesus Christ kind of encapsulated some of these concepts, right? Marriage, divorce, childbearing. Listen to what it says. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Betrothal back then was almost equivalent of marriage. They pretty much just hadn't done the marriage ceremony and the ritual that would consummate the marriage.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. If you read the scriptures, he had the right for sexual immorality, correct?

Mary was pregnant. But an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived of her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son. You shall call his name Jesus.

When Joseph awoke from his sleep, in verse 24, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded. He took his wife, but he did not know her or sleep with her until she had given birth to a son.

[12:23] And he called his name Jesus. I found that to be kind of interesting in backdrop of what was spoken about last week, about marriage, divorce, and such.

And, you know, as the ministry of Jesus becomes public, you know, what did they accuse him of? Or, who is your father and mother, you know, they accuse him of being a bastard, and legitimate, you know, that stayed with them.

Think about Mary and Joseph, the scrutiny that they would have had as a couple, raising a family and such. So today, we get into chapter 19, verse 13.

And I'll read through the end of the chapter through 29. Verse 30 really goes into something different. It kind of changes. It really should fit into the chapter 20.

It would be really where that should have been broken up. But that's neither here nor there. So let's read this, and then we'll dive in. I'm going to read the headlines as we go here.

[13:39] Little children, come to me. Then children were brought to him, that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

And he laid his hands on them, and he went away. This is the next section, the rich young man. And behold, a man came up to him, saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And he said, Why do you ask me what is good?

There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments. Reasonable. He said to him, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. This young man said, All these things I have kept. What one more thing do I lack?

Oh, gosh. Can you imagine the audacity in front of Jesus? Jesus said to him, If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me.

[14:43] That's all he had to do. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved?

But Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible. With God all things are possible. Then Peter, aren't you glad he's in the group? Hey, Lord, what about us?

We've lost everything. We don't fish with our dad anymore. Andrew and Simon don't, and Peter, James, and I don't, and John. We were just out here for the last three years, left our family and everything, you know?

What about us? Jesus says to them, How do you think they're thinking about eternal things? Or do you think Peter might be thinking about temporal things?

[15:44] Lord, when you set up your kingdom, you know, you think they really had that spiritual mindset yet? It's hard to know, but Jesus said to them, In the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. Now, Jesus is not saying it's a works-based salvation.

He's talking about the reward of the benefit of being his disciple. Don't confuse it. Don't use this passage for, you know, some kind of, or you've got to do something to be saved.

Little children, verse 13 and 15. It's interesting that it follows the conversation about marriage and divorce, because what is the natural offspring of a marriage relationship?

One of the purposes of marriage is to have children, right? One of the purposes of marriage is to have children, right?

[17:05] It's interesting that it's mentioned here between the Pharisees and the self-righteous young ruler. Consider for a moment that this man claimed to have kept the law from his youth.

What person in this room, when they were a child, always obeyed their father and mother? Raise your hand. Raise your hand if you were a child and you never stole anything.

Oh, you bunch of thieves. Don't leave your purse in the aisles and the funders. What about, did you ever fight or get angry when you were a child?

Did you ever set your brother up or sister up to get in trouble instead of you? Who did that?

Michelle, I see it. I was the youngest of five, so nine years older than me and then a bunch in between, others in between us, you know, first born and last born.

So when I was nine, my oldest was 18, you know. I was nine, my brother was 14, you know, my other brother. Two sisters in there like my kids, you know. But one time I faked out my dad and made it look like my brother kicked me down the basement steps because I was tired of him picking on me, you know.

[18:26] That worked. You know. I mean, that was, but it was honest. I didn't lie. I stole candy from a neighbor one time.

Back then, you know, in the 60s when you grew up, 1968, 69, 70, you didn't lock your doors in your house and you didn't lock your cars. Keys were in the cars.

Neighbors next door were gone and my friend Sean and I, Sean Collins, we grew up next to each other and we're good friends. Hey, let's go into Larson's house and get some candy. We knew right where it was, you know. So we went in their back door, went on the kitchen countertop, took the lid off.

They had string licorice in there every day. Now, if you grew up in a family of five Catholic, dad worked, mom, quote, didn't, but that's another story. They had the good stuff.

Like the Collins had all the good cereal. We had not the good cereal, you know. They could watch the Three Stooges. We couldn't. That's a whole other story, too. So we went in their house and we opened the jar and grabbed some candy and we're going out the door.

[19:27] Guess who comes home? Mrs. Larson. Busted, you know. So I never as a kid did anything wrong. Just like this rich young ruler. Let's call him Elon.

How about that? Let's call him Elon for the rest of the discussion here. Maybe not. He's like a lay Pharisee. His mindset is a pharisaical mindset, right?

What good deed do I have to do to be saved? Have eternal life? I believe these verses show a contrast of a self-righteous person and the simple faith of a child. When you read this text, you can sense the entanglement that this young man has in the ways of the world.

You can derive from the exchange that he has wrestled with Jesus' questions in all mind. Elon believed he could perform a good work or deed and earn eternal life.

It is as if he already believed that he had achieved eternal life and wanted to verify it. According to the understanding of the Jews at that time, wealth was an indication of a life lived in accordance with the law that was rewarded in a material way to the individual.

[20:41] Can't blame him for his questions, can you? Let's say he's 35. Appear with Jesus. We don't know his age, but he's young. Let's say he's 30-ish.

Had wealth, had material, had influence. And Jesus was the new rabbi on the scene, right?

What is this new thing? John the Baptist and Jesus. To this man he's not God. He's just another teacher who's bringing some truth into the Jewish culture.

So the question isn't wrong, right? What thing? David's saying, yeah it is, but what thing do I need to do? Reasonable. Obviously they believe they could earn it.

It was as if you passed some bar exam. You know what I mean? So if you study to be a lawyer or a doctor, but you don't pass your test to be a lawyer, are you a lawyer?

[21:46] If you go to medical school but you can't pass the bar, are you a doctor? You might have a PhD and be called doctor, but you can't practice. So I think this guy's kind of looking at it like that.

Hey, what other thing do I got to hang on the wall as a diploma and certification of I've arrived. I've done it. I've made it, right? It makes sense.

So, summary. He believed eternal life could be earned. He believed the payment for eternal life was good deeds. He believed he was potentially good enough to make the payment himself. That's this guy, the rich young ruler.

Jesus tells this guy, if you want to be perfect, sell everything you have, good to the poor, you'll have treasure in heaven and follow me. But this man says, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

Do we or do anyone really have great possessions? Look at Pacific Palisades right now. Who living there in that community, 10,000 victims of this wildfire, have great possessions today?

[ 22 : 59 ] None of them. Very few were spared, right? They could have money and bank accounts, that kind of thing. But they interviewed, what's his name, an actor?

Huh? Mel Gibson. So, the guy has a beautiful house, a mansion, all kinds of things. He has artifacts, artwork, books.

He said he had books, a book collection, so the result is 1,600. You know, so this guy probably has artifacts, let's just say. And things in his home that he bought, I don't know if he had cars and all that, like Jay Leno and those guys, you know.

But if Jay Leno's house burned down, how many cars would burn? All of them. You know, how many are left? None or whatever, you know, in many of these people's homes. So, now what does he have? All those great possessions.

They could be insured, but they're not replaceable, are they? You know, you could have a one-off painting worth a lot of money. You could buy it as an investment like wealthy people do, but it's gone.

[ 24 : 02 ] But anyway, this guy was given the chance to follow Jesus. But you know what? I believe that even if he did, do you think he would have been righteous?

I think even in this guy is so proud that he would have failed even in his giving up of everything. You know why? He would have had resentment getting rid of it.

He would have sinned with envy, jealousy, anger, unloving. His heart would have failed him. Can any of you relate to that? As much as you and I try to follow Jesus, do you find that your heart fails you?

Yeah. That's the human condition. So, what good deed can you do to gain eternal life? It has to be imparted to you by a righteous God, by a complete payment for sin done on your behalf by a perfect person, and that's Jesus Christ.

He made him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ because I believed, believed on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

[ 25 : 27 ] I didn't do a work. It was a gift. I was quickened. I responded. I believed. It all happened for me like that.

Sitting on the floor in my bedroom in my house when I was 19 years old with Sean Collins. He was doing the bridge method of salvation. Before he got all the way down, I knew if I was to die today, I was going to the pit of hell forever, regardless of what I knew up to that point.

I started weeping, crying. Not crying loud, but weeping, tearing, believed. And he asked me to say a prayer. Did that prayer save me? I was already saved before he led me in a prayer.

God quickened me. Did I receive and believe the message? Yeah, that's the conduit. That's the conduit of us receiving this salvation.

It's not a good work. It's belief. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there's one thing that we treasure here at Bethel, it is a clear, simple gospel.

[ 26 : 41 ] And if you don't believe me in the testimony of my life, that's fine. But believe, I can tell you, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll be saved. And that's what the New Testament teaches us.

Don't forget it. Don't vary from it. Don't drift off into this other junk that's going on out there right now. Those aren't in my notes.

All right. What does, it kind of was, but what does the Bible teach? James 2.10. Who knows it and can say it right now out loud? James 2.10.

Amen. For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. We, like the rich young ruler by nature, are guilty before a holy and perfect God.

Amen? Right? So none of you have a standing before a holy God now or in the past that could do anything to earn or gain salvation.

[ 27 : 44 ] It was done on your behalf by Christ, received by faith. Enough about that. The real question, several questions, you know, this is such an obvious thing I've already asked it.

Does the Bible clearly explain the plan of salvation? Yes. Colossians 2.13-14. Good verses. Let me look them up.

And I don't have time to go over some of these other verses, so let's just look at this one. And then we'll bop into Romans for a second. And then, this is not, it can't be exhaustive, I'm sorry.

What time did we start? Because that clock says noon. And we haven't been here for three weeks, so you're in trouble. I know we didn't start at 1130.

So Kevin, walk out when I should shut up, okay? So it's his fault now. Colossians 2.13-14. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath God quickened together with him, have forgiven all your trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.

[ 29 : 07 ] Linda Rickert always loved those verses. They were really good. Romans chapter 3, and then we'll jump into the next section real quick. Romans 3. Gosh, you've got to love this one.

Paul wrote this. Preserved for us through the ages. A whole other discussion. Romans 3. 9-26.

What then? Are we better than the Jews? No, for we have before proven both Jews and Gentiles are all, all, everyone, ever, forever, are all under sin.

They always have been. They always will be. You can pinch your flesh and you're alive. You're born. You're always under sin. In verse 10, it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.

Verse 26, I think it is. To declare, I say, because Jesus was a propitiation for our sins forever. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.

[ 30 : 16 ] There is that word again, believe. Simple, believe. Let's move on to our text in chapter 19, verse 20. Let's skip these things about the riches and all that.

I want to get into this thing about children. I want to express to you in all my failings, humility, pride, shortcomings, and experiences and beliefs about raising godly children.

I am a father of five children. My oldest, youngest are nine years apart. Jeffrey and Teresa are reliving my life. They have five kids.

There are a number of things that come up when you have five kids or more. And as I talk about some of these things, I'm going to be kind of, normally we don't say the religion we were in before we became born-again Christians and into this type of church.

But I'm going to mention that as I say a few things this morning. I think it's important. So I'm going to just do it. Vehicles. Seven seatbelts in a vehicle is the minimum.

[ 31 : 31 ] As your kids are your age, seven's not enough. You need about 12. That's what we ended up with. A 15-passenger van worked out great. Back then, conversion vans had seven buckles.

It wasn't enough. Gary worked on my... How long did you keep that thing going for us? A hundred and... Let me praise to Gary Park. I bought that old Swagger wagon with 66,000 miles on it. I ran it to 260 thanks to him.

Two and a half transmissions. I only paid \$4,500 for the thing back in whenever that was. Two thousand, four, five, or three. It was a pretty good deal.

It was just a panel van. I mean, not a panel van. It was a passenger van. But anyway, that worked out the best. Big back in. Everybody borrowed it. Some people call it the blessing van. That thing went all over the country without me in it.

You know what? Tom, you want to borrow the keys? Go ahead. One time I gave it to Kurt Stessel. He went to take a bunch of boys to a minor league baseball game over in Illinois.

[ 32 : 30 ] And I had recently changed the oil in it. But I didn't get the filter back on all the way. It was full of oil when I left my driveway.

Kurt calls. He goes, hey, that thing's smoking a lot. I go, that's all right. It smokes. He was like an old employee at Firely. He smokes. He gets back to my house while I realize, you know, I hadn't had the filter on there all the way, you know.

So, yeah, it was funny. But Jacob took one of our vans to Iowa. We're going to Iowa. Take the van. He got stuck in snow. I never knew that until this year.

He showed me pictures. Yeah, this is where we got stuck on the road in Iowa, Dad. And somebody pulled me out. I'm like, oh, I didn't ever do that. It's covered in ice. Now, back to big family or whatever, five kids.

We left Jacob in the van in Texas in 100-degree weather when he was about 7 or 8. We did it. We went into Target, and Jacob was in the car. When we went out to eat, for you young parents, this is the killer.

[ 33 : 35 ] We'd sit down. Going out to eat was an event. Take five kids out. I would tip the waitress before we'd order. They'd seat us, seven of us, right, at a table, and they'd jam us into whatever, you know, and runny noses and all that.

And I'd give her a five. You know, Bob Evans or whoever it was. Here's what I want you to do, ma'am. They'd look at me like, what's this? I'd go, that's the beginning of your tip. I, all right. That never happened to them. I said, bring me, before I ever order my food, this is what I want at my table. I won't give you an order until I get it. I want extra silverware, extra napkins, straws, coloring sheets, crayons, and ketchup.

Doggone it. Bring me the ketchup before I get the food because by the time you bring me the food and I ask for ketchup, we're halfway done, right? And the kids can't sit anymore. So that worked. That's a good tip.

And then talking about being truthful. I'm sorry. I'm getting rambling. Kids eat free. How old is a child? I never did that.

[ 34 : 45 ] So here's some funny stats. I'll move forward, but we had children in diapers for 12 years.

Can you imagine how much money that is? How much poop? Sorry. How many times we changed diapers? You know, when the youngest comes around, you say, well, it says up to 18 pounds.

And so you'd wait and change. That poor kid, my brothers and sisters claimed I was spoiled as youngest of five. I watched Jacob's life. He lived my life. No nap time. No bedtime.

You got up whenever they told you to. You went wherever they said to go. You went to the schools they chose for you. Right? You didn't have, and you wore their clothes and rode their bikes.

I'm not sure that was such a good deal. They said I was spoiled. Maybe I was. I don't know. I'd carry kids in from the car when they were asleep.

[ 35 : 47 ] Did you do that? So that's not 12 years. That's 14 years if the kids are nine years apart. Jacob, the youngest, right? So I've been doing this for 10 years, 12 years.

I'd climb in the van. And if Jacob's asleep or not, I don't know because he's faking it. I reach in there. I sling him up under my shoulder like this. Get out of the van.

I'm lifting him up. I'm realizing I'm in decent shape at that time. And I'm younger. And I go, dude, this kid weighs like a big bag of cement. This is like 80 pounds.

I just stopped. Dropped him. I said I'm never carrying you in the house again unless your legs are broken. I didn't say that, but I'm like, you go in yourself. That was it.

But you don't realize it, right? It's like a frog in boiling water. You don't realize what you're doing until you stand back and go, this kid's 80 pounds. I'm still... All right.

[ 36 : 45 ] Here we go. Nikki and I are... Man, and I can't get to it all. All right. Nikki and I are not ideal candidates for what we've done in our lives. I was raised Roman Catholic.

She was not. I got saved at 19, and so did she. I'm a year older than her. When I got saved, I was in and out of walking with the Lord. At one point, between 19 and 21, 22, roughly 21, I put all my Christian stuff, because I was saved at 19 in March.

I went to a Baptist church youth group, and I didn't get fed enough. And Sean, my neighbor, was the only light in my world. So I went back to partying, living in the world, drinking, doing drugs, whatever.

Excessively. I took that box. So then I'd go back into fellowship. I went to Mizzou. So I went to St. Louis U. Then I went to Mizzou. I went to Mizzou. I started out as a heathen.

In September, a Christian witnessed to me. I walked with the Lord until May. And then I said, forget this stuff again. And went back to the world. There's a verse in Peter that says, he who goes back to what was before is a worse situation than before.

[ 38 : 02 ] I'm paraphrasing. I think it's talking about false prophets and things like that, false teachers. I'll tell you, in my life, every time I put my Christianity away as being a born-again believer because I was sealed by God, not by my works, it got worse.

So if I was into drugs and alcohol before, I was into it worse. You know what I mean? There wasn't enough thrill when you're in that stuff to get you to the next level.

By God's grace, I survived those years. Literally, like senior year of high school, there was a scar on my head because my friend Mike Harrison and I were at a party until 2 in the morning, two weeks after I got my stitches out from my naptectomy around Highway 44 in a snowstorm like this week. And you know the sign when you go west on 44? It says, Oakland City Limits? Well, that sign there is still there. It was there in 1979. And we hit a parked car on the highway going about 45 miles an hour in the snow at 2 in the morning.

I don't know why I'm saying all this to you, but I was gone. I was obliterated. My friend had paraphernalia and drugs in the car. I broke open his glove box, threw it all over the fence right there. [ 39 : 16 ] Cops came, took us to St. Joe's Hospital. I had stitches in my head, a glass in my head. His granada was totaled. You know, imagine hitting a car at 45 miles an hour in the snow.

Here's how good a friend he was. He cussed me out because I threw his pot away and his quaaludes and his bong or whatever else was in the car. I know, this is not great.

Went to the hospital. They had to call my parents. We were out of town to get permission to stitch my head back together. I don't even think they gave me any anesthesia. I didn't need it. And I'm not kidding.

And the doctors were cursing me and, you know. So Nikki and I get together and we're not great. Her life isn't any better than mine. And potentially, you know, both.

Do you mind if I keep talking? Okay. Because it's 1210. There's a point to this. In the movie Planes, Trains, and Automobiles, Steve Martin says to John Caron D, When you're telling a story, have a point.

[ 40 : 22 ] It sure makes it more interesting to those who are listening. There is a point. Nikki and I were both a mess. A flat-out mess. Addiction.

Under psychiatric care. Suicidal tendencies. Suicide attempts, potentially.

And that's what God chose. To put together. To raise a family. And raise godly offspring. In the book of Malachi, God says in marriage, is to produce godly offspring.

So you got two young punks, don't know anything about life, right? We're a mess. We're a hot mess. We are like, what do you do to help this couple?

Right? Where do you start? You know, it took me 12 years to finish college. You know, I graduated in 1990 after we had our firstborn.

[ 41 : 36 ] You got five different schools because I could not get my life together as a 20-year-old, 21-year-old. She grew up. You know, so here's what God says. He joins us together.

I put away my Christianity. So did she. We got married in the Catholic Church. She became Roman Catholic. We got married at Immaculate Conception in Maplewood, right up from Kevin's house.

Then we moved into South St. Louis about 1986. We started fellowshiping and having Bible study at our home and all this. And Kevin, you can get up. You're to blame now. Get up. Do you want me to stop?

I'm getting ready. Okay. All right, I'll wrap it up. Here's the deal. God took us. And I stood in my parents' house like this rich young ruler who would not forsake everything.

And as an adult married, I felt an obligation being raised Roman Catholic, youngest of five, all that goes with that, Catholic schools, all that stuff. And I stood with my parents in the kitchen.

[ 42 : 33 ] I said, Mom and Dad, I am no longer going to go to the Catholic Church. It was somewhere in 1986. I was probably 25 years old. I am not going back. My mom, to the day she died, or was conscious or cognitive, prayed that I would return to the true church.

Can you imagine any time you get together? I was like, well, Tommy, are you going to come back to the church? All right? So, fast forward now. My brother Joe came to our house when Lydia had a shower for my daughter-in-law.

And he's sitting on the couch at our house a couple weeks ago, 35, 40 years later. He says, why did you leave the Catholic Church? You know we thought you were in a cult.

You know you and Nikki, we couldn't understand what you guys were doing. You left the Catholic Church. You moved out to the country. You homeschooled your kids. You lived out rural.

What are you doing? And he finally agreed that that was a good decision. My parents never acknowledged that.

[ 43 : 43 ] My brother, my oldest brother, Gary and Eileen, a couple years ago, all our kids were together for a holiday. They go, gosh, Tommy, or said to Nikki, I'm sister-in-law.

How is it that your family all gets along? They want to be together. And they're successful in raising good kids, too. We would say, it's the Lord. It's in spite of us.

Brass tacks, young couples. Here it is. Ready? Ready? Get yourself here under the teaching of this church or fellowship.

Somewhere here would be great. Weekly. Commit yourself to this fellowship. Commit yourself to the breaking of bread.

Raise your kids here. We did it. You can do it. I had some examples. Robert and Barb. Nathan and Paula Batchelder.

[ 44 : 41 ] Orlando and Stephanie. Mark and Denise. Brandenburg. Pat and Pat Fitzgerald. Dave was with us through a lot of this.

We've been together through a lot. If the musicians want to come up, we'll wrap this up. I want you to be here. I want you to raise your kids here. I want you to teach your kids the things of the Lord. I want you to have them remember why we do this on Sunday. You know? The Bible says in Timothy or 2 Timothy that you have known to Timothy, Paul said, you have known from an infant. The Holy Scriptures from your grandmother and your mother. When do you start training a child in the way he should go? In utero. In the mother's womb. Jesus formed you in your mother's womb. That child, that baby can hear you talk. You can speak to that child. Joel learned scriptures at three years old. He used to quote them to Steve Eck when we'd pick Steve up and take him to church with us.

[ 45 : 44 ] Joel would learn Sunday school in both rooms at Believers because there was a divider. Our kids sat in church. All five of them weren't disruptive because we trained each one of them.

When we had four, I could reach the fourth. And I would take them out and I'd sit out there on my lap, make them sit still and bring them back in. I did that for 12 years, 14 years until we came to Bethel where they had daycare and all that.

Or nursery. Never had it. You can do it. If you're a young man or woman, you have children, husband, wife, commit yourself to these things.

Women, women, wives, if your husband is a knucklehead and doesn't take the leadership, you get up Sunday morning and you get those kids ready and you'll be ready to go 10 minutes before you need to leave.

And you have your kids start going in and say, Daddy, we're ready to go. Daddy, we're going to see the brother. We're going, Daddy.

[ 46 : 50 ] You coming? Daddy, what are you doing? I don't care when you went to bed. I don't care what you did yesterday. We're going. Do it. You will reap a hundredfold.

No greater joy than hearing my kids walk in the truth. I've got adult children serving the Lord. Start the song. I've got adult children serving the Lord. One does BBS.

Anna and Lydia, you know. Please, take this and let it be something that God uses in your life.

Make 2025 be a lion in the sand.

This is what I'm going to do. And women, young girls, look for a godly man that's walking with the Lord. I'm glad you're here. Let's pray.

Let's sing a song. Sorry I went late. Let's sing a song.