

God's Treatment Plan for Spiritual Renewal

Romans 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Philippians 4:13

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For some of you who might be wondering, how come on one Sunday a month we keep the kids in here?

Well, it's an experiment.

And so far, the experiment has gone well.

So praise God for that.

Now, some of you know that, because I've mentioned it a time or two, that I've been struggling with back issues for six or seven years.

I guess I was thinking this a little bit ago.

I was like, it must be a sign I'm getting older, because that's all I talk about is all the stuff with my health that's gone wrong.

And it's my back as it would turn out.

And over the years, I've gone to different doctors, and some have given me, have been helpful.

I had a chiropractor who was very helpful as far as it went, but he couldn't quite get it all the way fixed.

And then I went to physical therapists and that was helpful.

And he said, all right, son, you can go work out again.

And well, it was not a pretty sight after two years of being dormant.

And as time has gone on, once again, I found my back to be aggravated.

And so I went to another doctor and he did something different.

He kept taking x-rays of my neck and I'm like, doc, the problem is in my back.

He said, yeah, I know that's what you think, but I suspect the problem is actually in your neck.

Sure enough, the neck was cockeyed and he's gone to work on getting my body in order.

But the problem down here in the back, which was where the pain was, was actually started in my neck.

It started a long time ago.

He said, I suspect that this injury is at least 25 years old.

And he kept asking me, have you had an accident?

I said, no, I've not.

I mean, I've had fender benders, but nothing significant.

And he kept asking in various ways.

And then all of a sudden it dawned on me.

When I was about 10 years old, the craziest accident happened.

I did a wheelie on my bike and the front wheel flew off the forks.

And I went down chin first onto the cement.

I didn't even get my hands up to slow down the fall.

I went and had stitches.

I have an X on my chin because the almost identical accident happened a second time.

That's why I'm not a BMX rider.

Apparently, I'm not very good at it.

But the exact same accident happened twice.

And I have an X on my chin from the two different times they stitched me up.

And what we found out was that sure enough, the neck got out of alignment from that.

And everything else in my back has been out of source.

And so what they have done is beget...

He wrote up a treatment plan.

When you go to a doctor, because you've got various medical issues, whether it's mental, emotional, or physical, they design for you a treatment plan.

And what I want you to see is this.

As Christians, one of the things that we know is that we are on a treatment plan.

We have a prescription from God for spiritual renewal.

It began a long time ago.

In fact, as it would turn out, just like I found out with my back issues, the issue goes back much farther than we realized when it comes to our spiritual health.

We typically think of the first time that we sinned, and I can remember pretty well the first time that I lied

or broke mom's rules in a very, very significant way.

But as it would turn out, the problems in me went way back further.

In fact, it goes back to my ancestors and your ancestors all the way to Adam and Eve.

And so because of their choice to sin, we have been, the human race has been fallen in sin, and we are sinners by birth and then by choice.

So our spiritual problem actually goes much further back than we realized.

And so now we are on a treatment plan.

When I worked at the psych hospital with those, those patients, what we had them on a treatment plan, everything from, hey, you really are going to get three meals a day and a snack.

No, you're not allowed to, to sock that food away because that was actually something that would kind of get them in trouble.

Not because we were worried about food rotting, but because we were tree teaching them, we found that they were more likely to have a little bit of emotional health if they knew their life was going to be stable.

So there was counseling that went on, stable adults in their life.

There was a treatment plan.

I want you to see this as Christians, God has put us on a treatment plan for spiritual renewal because we have lost spiritual health because of sin.

A lot of times as Americans, we think of our life in drawers.

We've got Austin, I gave him my childhood dresser.

It's scratched up, but it's got big drawers for the sweaters, big drawers for the pants, and then two little drawers on top for the underwear and the socks.

And a lot of times as Christians, even as Christians in America, we think, okay, the big drawer is school, the other big drawer is community involvement, the other big drawer is sports, and the little drawer is the spiritual life.

But actually, that's backwards.

Because when you study the scriptures out, as it would turn out, every single other sphere of life, every single drawer of our life is affected by the spiritual life.

Not sure why you have a hard time forgiving spiritual condition.

Not sure why you're constantly anxious.

Ultimately, it's not the circumstances around us.

It's how we respond to those circumstances, and that's usually a spiritual problem.

I have a tendency at times to overeat.

That might be a spiritual problem.

When we hang on to unforgiveness, it affects our health, which is a spiritual problem.

See, the root is much deeper than we know, and that's the bad news.

But the good news is this.

God has us on a spiritual treatment plan that began the moment we put our trust in Jesus Christ.

And so this morning, beginning for the month of March, we're going to talk about God's spiritual treatment plan for spiritual renewal.

We're going to begin by looking at Romans chapter 12.

So go ahead and turn there.

While you're turning there, I want to give you kind of an overview of the book of Romans.

And it kind of goes like this.

In chapter one, he starts saying, I am unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God for salvation.

To everyone who believes.

And then he goes on for the next seven chapters to explain to you what the gospel is, why we need it.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

The wages of sin is death.

Not only physical death, but separation from God for eternity.

Here's the thing.

We don't like to say this a whole lot anymore, but the destiny for those who reject Christ is hell.

The ultimate separation, the ultimate health problem, the ultimate with no hope of renewal.

And so he starts then to lay this out, and then he gets to Romans 6 and he says, he's assuming a question.

When I was talking to my doctor, I said, am I allowed to lift weights right now?

He's like, no, not for right now.

Similarly, so I asked a question.

Well, Paul assumes a question that any Christian would ask.

If we're saved by grace and not by obedience to the law, can we just go on living in sin?

And the answer is absolutely not.

How can we who died to sin, continue to live in it?

That's a radical presentation.

We are born again, we're dead to sin and alive to God.

And he starts talking about your baptism.

Baptism portrayed it.

Chapter 7, one of the most encouraging statements there.

Paul, the great apostles, talking about the struggle he has as a Christian.

You ever struggle with sin as a Christian?

Felt like you couldn't get victory.

And Paul says, who will save me from this body of death?

All praise be to God through Christ Jesus, who gives us the victory.

Chapter 8 talks about the life and the spirit.

9-11 talks about God's future plans for Israel.

Chapter 12, after everything he has said about the gospel, he starts to say, here now is how I want you to live.

Here's what God wants from you.

Let's read.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable, your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you for today.

I thank you that I can see your hand, your sovereign hand today in our worship service over the song

selection, over the prayer time from Jake.

You are a God who likes to refurbish things that are broken down.

You fix things, you fix people.

I pray that today, regardless of where everyone is in their spiritual journey with you, that today would be a significant day for spiritual renewal.

Guide us as we listen, guide us as we study, help us to be transformed.

It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

When you look at the Bible, one of the big picture, one of the great ways I've seen this portrayed when describing the sweep of biblical history, is to describe something like this.

When you look at Adam and Eve, they were in this perfect environment, and when they were doing things God's way, they lived in the place of blessing.

But when they and anybody else who deviates from God's design for how life is supposed to work, when we deviate from it and do things our way instead of God's, it leads to brokenness, broken hearts, broken homes, broken emotions, broken thoughts.

The pain is real, and what we usually do when we feel those pains is we try to address those pains in various different ways.

Some of us, we've tried dating more often.

I got to date more people, and that's going to fix the hole in my heart.

Some people have turned to alcohol.

If I just drink more, that will solve all of my problems.

Homer Simpson told us something important.

He said he held a toast to alcohol.

The cause of and solution to all of life's problems.

Most of our solutions simply lead to more brokenness.

I have learned this recently in different ways sometimes too.

So when I was talking to my doctor, one of the things that sort of startled me was when he pointed out, hey, how have you taken care of this pain?

Because you obviously, well, you're messed up.

And I said, I've done this, I've done that.

And I said, took ibuprofen.

He said, how much?

And when I told him, I'm okay now, but for about three years, I lived on ibuprofen.

And he said, do you have any idea how bad that can be for your kidneys the amount you're taking?

I said, no.

One of the things that we find out is that sometimes even whether it's physical and spiritual, our attempts to deal with the problems in our lives usually create new ones or more of the same.

And here's the bad news about that.

The bad news is God wants us to see you can't fix you, but he can.

He sent Jesus Christ into the world to solve our original problem.

The original problem is our separation from God because of sin.

Our original problem is the guilt that we feel because we have broken God's rules.

One of the things that I learned a long time ago, especially when I lived in Ellington, there were a lot of good boys, good old boys, did a lot of good things right.

But because they did a lot of things right, they didn't think they needed Jesus for salvation.

Fact was they were going to hell because they kept rejecting him.

The same is true in the country and the same is true in the city.

A lot of times people think they don't need Jesus and they keep trying to solve their problems on their own, and it leads to more brokenness.

God uses the pain of brokenness when we finally get to the end of ourselves to come to Him for salvation.

Jesus Christ the Rescuer, the Great Physician, He comes, lives his sin with life.

The Son of God, die that across for your sins and mine.

The just in place of the unjust.

And He rises from the dead.

And now God doesn't want you to say, that's a very great story.

He wants you to say, I've put my trust in Jesus.

I'm all in with Him.

And when you do that, check this out.

When you put your trust in Jesus, you receive the Holy Spirit.

And He enables you to reclaim God's original design for your life, which has been broken by sin.

But it begins with reconciliation with God.

Well, now Paul is writing here to the Romans and he's already addressed these things.

These are people who know Jesus Christ.

And now he's going to say, here's how I want you to live.

He says, don't be conformed to the things of the past that shaped you before you came to know Jesus.

Let's work our way through this passage a little bit.

He says, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God.

When he says by the mercies of God, that's a shorthand way of saying the gospel.

All the first eight chapters, he dealt with it.

Jesus died for your sins, rose again.

He says, by the mercies of God.

He's not appealing on the basis of fear or terror.

You're already at peace with God because of what Jesus did.

And therefore, by the mercies of God, I appeal to you, present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

That idea of a living sacrifice means fully surrendered to God.

All that I am, all that I have, I give to you.

My life dreams, my checkbook, how I'm going to spend the next 10 minutes of my life, the next hour, the rest of my life, Lord, it's yours.

It's a blank check.

You fill it in.

All that I am, all that I have is yours.

That is what it means to be a living sacrifice.

It continues, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

That word is probably in your different translations.

It might be rendered differently.

The Greek word is *logicae*.

It has the idea of reasonable or logical.

Because of what Jesus did for you, this is the reasonable thing.

Live life as an act of worship, in full surrender to God.

Verse 2, do not be conformed to this world.

You know, our attitudes and actions and behaviors are shaped by the things around us.

But be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So the mercies of God, that's a shorthand way of talking about the gospel.

When you see the letters WWW, it's short for World Wide Web.

USA, United States of America, and AFL-CIO, I don't know what that means, but you know that means something longer than those letters.

Somebody tell me later what the AFL-CIO stands for.

We have a shorthand way of saying things, the same way here, the mercies of God, the gospel.

Present yourself to God via living sacrifice.

This is true worship.

Watch this.

That is inspired by gratitude.

Inspired by gratitude.

I have at times heard well-meaning brothers preach in a way that calls the body rightly, the Christian rightly, to live for God, but usually does so out of a motivation of fear and terror.

And I suppose there may be room for that, but what I see in here is, look, Jesus loved you so much, sacrificed for you so much, it's only reasonable that you live for Him.

It's not a, hey, you've got to earn your salvation.

It's not a, hey, you've got to keep yourself saved.

You and I, as Christians, we're already accepted in Christ.

This is not a small matter.

It's a massive matter that it changes everything else.

And he says, live for God.

Don't be conformed to this world.

Our attitude, actions, values, and our pattern of life are shaped by the experiences that we've experienced in this world.

Your childhood home, the neighborhood you grew up in, how many times you moved, how many people that you have dated, the friends that you hang out with.

It has been well said that show me your friends and I will show you your future.

Our friends, our family, the music we listen to, the movies we watch, they shape our hearts and minds.

And what he's saying is, look, don't be conformed to the image of this world.

And the image of the world is different in Tanzania than it is here in Tilton, but there is patterns here.

There are patterns in Ellington, patterns in North Olmsted where I grew up from.

And what he's saying is, look, you are citizens of heaven now.

Don't be conformed to the world anymore, but be transformed.

I saw this play out when I was getting my assessment done by the doctor.

He didn't just do x-rays and poke on some things.

He started asking questions.

I have homework to do.

He asked questions about what, actually he asked a lot of questions about the behavioral patterns of my family, going all the way back to mom and dad.

And what he said was, your behavioral patterns are often dictated by the people you're around.

Boy, isn't that true?

You know what else it lines up with scripture, because what he's saying is, your patterns are naturally dictated by the people around you, but no more because you're born again.

You're a child of God.

You have a new family, the people of God.

So don't be conformed, but be transformed.

This requires a change.

It requires a healing.

Despite our past, we are being transformed into something new.

We are being made new in Christ Jesus.

We must renew our minds.

Now, when I see that, I had to pause because I'm a pastor, theologian.

I have a nerd moment every time, at least once.

Here it is.

I am very big on grace.

When I say that, I mean, not just that I'm saved by grace, but here's how I understand grace working in salvation.

You ready?

I grew up with Christian parents.

That's grace.

My mom and dad got saved.

Grace, because my uncle David got saved and started talking about Jesus.

And then they were listening to the radio and all these pieces start going together.

Mom and dad get saved and I start going to church.

We got this.

Before that, other people spoke into their lives.

And here's the thing.

Salvation is by grace through faith.

If someone came to you and shared the gospel, that's God's grace.

The existence that grace, that salvation by grace through faith is possible.

It's grace.

Something you and I don't deserve.

But even that would go so far as to say, as I understand it, even the fact that I believe the gospel is a work of grace.

And so when I hear sometimes I read passages like this, and I've encountered other Christians that say, you can't talk about working hard in the Christian life.

My friend, a good friend of mine over at a Bible study, sitting across from the table, and we were wrestling with this, and he said, grace is not opposed to effort.

It is opposed to earning.

Grace is not opposed to effort.

It is opposed to earning.

And so when we say something like, when the Bible says something like, don't be conformed, be transformed by the renewal of your mind, it is inviting us to put effort forth.

But it's never an earning.

It's never an earning.

We must renew our minds.

Why?

Because our thoughts, attitudes, and life patterns are shaped by this world.

And God has given us a new paradigm.

God's treatment plan begins the moment we put our trust in Jesus for salvation.

We call this born again.

You guys who have been in church your whole life, me too, that phrase born again can become theologians, and I would say Christians, because there is a thing where we get so used to Bible terms that it doesn't seem to hit us the way it used to.

Born again is radical.

It's a whole new way of life.

It's not like the old.

It's a transformed life, a new paragraph, a new life in the Spirit.

And it's not something that everyone in this world knows.

But you know it.

So this call, this treatment plan began the moment we were born again.

And we are being encouraged here to be transformed to participate in God's treatment plan.

Some doctors, if they're honest, will tell you that some patients are good patients, and some patients are not good patients.

I suppose a nurse could tell you that too.

Notice I didn't say good people.

Some patients are good patients, some are not.

Some will listen to what the doctor says, some will not.

I have friends, a friend, I have lots of friends like this, but one, he got double knee replace from surgery.

His doctor told him to wait at least 24 hours in the hospital bed before you get up and walk around, then we're going to slowly get you up.

Well, before nightfall, on the day of the surgery, he's walking around.

I saw some faces go, yeah, he got, he beat the odds, though.

Then he got on, he goes to physical therapy, and then he got tired of it.

So he stops going to physical therapy.

And after time, one day we're talking, he looks at me, he goes over his glasses.

I should have listened to that doctor.

Yeah, seven years of med school, staying up on top of all the latest treatments.

Yeah, he probably should have listened to him.

Great man, not a good patient.

As Christians, some of us are good patients of the great physician and some of us are not.

We know what the doctor said, where not to go, what not to do, what to embrace, attitudes not to embrace, but we do it anyway.

And God's got a treatment plan.

He's saying, here's what you need to do.

And we're going to work through some of that this month.

But the treatment plan, watch this, corner of Romans 12.2 will enable you to discover God's perfect will for you.

It will help you see yourself as God sees you and know who you are, what your worth is in Christ, what your purpose is.

And as well, it will also show you your flaws.

You will also learn who you are in Christ and what you are becoming.

So how do we do this?

How do we renew our mind?

Romans 12.2 talks about the call for renewing our mind.

But when we look at 2 Timothy 3.16-17, we see that God's treatment plan prescribes a steady diet of reading Scriptures in order to renew our mind.

Look at 2 Timothy 3.16-17.

You're going to know these well, but I want you to hear this as a prescription.

A description of a prescription.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man or woman of God may be complete, equipped for every good word.

When you see that word complete, you might think mature or you might think whole.

In your heart and mind, you feel whole this morning.

Is there something missing?

When we spend time as Christians looking at the Word of God, it starts to show us what we need to be whole.

It starts to make us whole.

When we look at this description, I want you to catch this.

Renewed hearts and minds require us to have new inputs.

The scripture.

He says, all scripture is breathed out by God.

All scripture, that's Old and New Testament.

It's breathed out by God.

That word breathed out by God, it comes from a Greek word, theonustos.

It's actually two words smashed together.

It means God breathed.

We all, some of your translations might say inspired.

When we hear the word inspired, we often think of something that's uplifting, motivating.

And what I want you to catch is, when we say that the Bible is inspired, here's what it means.

While I might say that Paul wrote Romans and Philippians, what I really mean when I say it's inspired is that God was the wind in their wings, enabling to write completely true and accurate statements.

These are not human opinions.

I want you to know something.

Medical science is a wonderful thing.

Psychiatry can be helpful.

But if you looked at the modern psychology manual, even from 20 years ago, you will see that some things changed.

Some of it might be based on science and some of them might be based on political science.

But God's Word is a sure word.

It does not change.

It tells us who God is, who we are, what He expects of us.

And the reason it's accurate, down to being able to predict all kinds of things before they happened, is because it is inspired by God.

God was the wind in the sails of the human authors.

That's a reliable source of information.

It goes on to say that it's useful.

It's useful.

It gets the job done.

Sometimes people think that the Bible is like a prescription.

You know, prescriptions eventually, the longer they sit in your cabinet, they're not as effective as they used to be.

Some people think that the Bible, because it's old, may not be effective and trustworthy anymore.

I've got news for you.

The human race keeps trying to do everything but what God's world has said, and it's not working out very well.

One of the things I thought of is I was sitting there at a coffee shop.

A Christian lady was sitting at a table behind me, and another Christian lady came in, and they sat down together, and they started talking, and they're catching up on what they're reading.

And one lady says, she said, well, what are you reading?

And she says, I have mostly self-help books.

I said, you got the best self-help book that was ever written.

Start there.

I wonder if there's a relationship between the average American not reading their Bible anymore, at the same time, there's been an increase in popularity of self-help books.

That'd be an interesting doctoral dissertation.

Somebody do that study and let me know what you find out.

We have the Bible.

It is useful.

It's not a prescription that loses potency over time.

It is effective today as when Jesus inspired it to be written.

And it gets results.

Number one, it's useful for teaching.

For teaching, I mean, that tells us what God, who God is, what we are like, what we need to do.

It's profitable for teaching.

It's useful for reproof.

For reproof, Scripture confronts sin and calls us to act.

Some time ago, a book was written by a counselor, not a Christian.

It was called, it was literally the title is Whatever Happened to Sin by Dr.

Carl Menninger.

What I began to notice as a counselor was that counselors no longer talked about sin.

I lived this when I worked in the counseling.

It was only positive and negative choices.

There was no actual right or wrong, just some that are positive and some that are not.

He recognized something.

The counseling industry was moving away from reproof.

There was no right or wrong.

Well, the Bible's got reproof in it, so it's sometimes uncomfortable when it says, hey, here's how God wants you to live.

Here's what you're not supposed to do.

That confronts us.

Then it goes on to say God's word also corrects us.

Sometimes when I've read that numerous times, I thought reproof and correct sure sound like the same thing.

It's actually not quite the same.

Here's the difference.

When I'm totally living in disobedience to God, the word of God sometimes punches me in the face.

But when I, as a Christian, am trying to do what's right, and I get a little off, you ever done that?

You tried to do what's right and you got a little bit off.

The word of God corrects us.

The difference is intensity.

When I see, when you see somebody who's trying to do what's right by God, and they're a little, got it a little messed up, they don't need a hip check into the glass.

They need a general reminder from a friend, brother, sister.

But sometimes when we're living in utter sin, we need a, we call it a call to Jesus moment.

That sounds too nice.

Sometimes we need a hip check from the scriptures.

And so the scriptures are useful for any season.

It's good for training in righteousness, which shows us how God wants us to live.

And the result is that we'll be ready for every good work.

What we talk about when we say every good work, we're talking about being a preacher, maybe, missionary, sure.

But what about being a stay-at-home mom or a teacher?

I like seeing godly teachers in the school system, but I sort of am starting to view them as missionaries going out into a hostile field because what they know is right is not always supported by the schools that they serve in.

We need Christians.

We need Christians in government.

We need Christians in every sphere of influence.

And so when we think about being equipped for every good work, it could be being a godly politician, a godly lawyer, a godly teacher, a principal.

But the Word of God prepares us for that.

Most of us want, I think if most of us are honest, we have a good quiet moment on vacation, we go, it sure would be nice to have a little more time to do some things that are good for other people and good for God.

Most of us want to do good things.

Sometimes scripture can help us by helping us stay focused and motivated.

The Bible is useful.

It's productive.

God's treatment plan gives us hope for the future because despite the pain of the past, we are being made new or becoming like Jesus.

At Calvary, when we talk about God's treatment plan, I actually give it to you all the time in numerous ways.

I say when God transforms us when we gather for worship, grow in personal devotions and in group studies and when we go, serve God both inside and outside of the church.

But this month, I want to dig a little deeper.

One of the things that I realized about a month ago, I oftentimes encourage Christians to spend time in the Word of God, because the Bible is a prescription, gives us a prescription.

It is the prescription.

But one of the things that happens if you went to a doctor tomorrow and they prescribed something, I don't know, we'll just say volume just because it's popping in my head.

They prescribed a medicine for you.

You know what that pharmacist is going to do?

He's going to tell you, here's how you take it safely, here's the unsafe way to do it, and here's when you should take it, and here's when you should stop taking it.

They call it a consultation.

And I, as Dr.

Dan, have not exactly given you a consultation on how to be effective in your personal devotional life.

So I'm going to do that really quick.

First off, number one, I would say, I encourage people to do it whenever it is the most likely that you're going to succeed.

If you're not going to get up early enough to do a devotional time, do it in the afternoon, do it at night.

I still am very favorable towards doing it in the morning because that's what Jesus did.

Nevertheless, some of us work third shift, some of us have second shift jobs, and it doesn't always work out well for us.

But find a time, be consistent, and make sure when you do your devotions, keep your phone away from you.

That's how the devil messes with us, with that stinking cell phone.

Second thing, when you read the scriptures, one of the things I think happened to us because we had this blessing called devotional books being sold to us.

Those are good.

The only problem I've had is they usually have one verse of scripture with two paragraphs of talk.

My problem is we might have accidentally taught Christians to read verses out of context.

One of the greatest, most important things is to make sure you read your Bible in context.

And so we're going to look at one really quick.

Philippians 4:13 is the one I want to encourage you with, but I really want us to read it in context.

I've seen Philippians 4:13 put on shoes.

I've seen guys bend metal frying pans and quote Philippians 4:13.

I'm overall good with that, but I really think I should see it in context when it says, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

I remember years ago, I was interviewing for a youth pastor position and one of the kids at the table picked up a styrofoam cup and quoted that verse.

Then he just poked his fingers through the cup and made holes.

I thought, well, that's a funny way of applying that verse.

His sister said, don't encourage him.

But Philippians 4:10-13, we're going to focus on verse 13.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length, you have revived your concern for me.

I wonder what he's talking about.

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

What does he mean when he says this?

See what I'm doing?

I'm asking questions.

Questions are powerful when we interpret and read the Bible.

Not that I'm speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

What does he mean?

He provides the answer.

I know how to be brought low.

That's humbled.

And I know how to abound, how to have success and wealth.

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger and abundance and need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Yet it was kind of you to share in my trouble.

And you, you, you Philippians know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except only you.

So the context is he's saying, hey, thanks for the gift.

He said, sent a gift to support his ministry.

That's context.

Number two, he's thanking them for it, but he wants them to know, hey, I'm thanking you for it, but I'm not asking for more money.

That's not for me.

I'm fine whether I'm poor or rich.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Context is king when we read the scripture.

So here's what I've done to help with this.

In your bulletins, I always put these little white inserts, and it usually has the outline of the sermon.

Most of you don't look at it.

Some of you do.

In that bulletin insert today is a take-home thing.

I have walked through what is called the soap Bible study method.

Scripture, observation, application, prayer.

I've been using this with the youth and Sunday school in part because it's easier, but I also want them to know how to read the Bible themselves.

But here, when I came across this method, I didn't invent the method.

It's been around for years.

Jay, this morning, told me he learned it.

His dad taught him when he was eight.

Good job, dad.

It's been around for a long time.

Read the scripture, make observations.

What do you see?

What's he talking about?

What's he saying about what he's talking about?

Who's he talking about?

Read this stuff in context, and then you make applications.

Is there a truth to know and believe?

Is there a behavior to change?

Is there an example to follow?

When you start asking questions like this, not only will your Bible study be much more fruitful, you're going to then know what, hey, here's what I need to do differently, and then you're going to know how to pray, God help me to do what this text says.

See, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I like it because it encourages us because sometimes when we have struggled to get over our hurts, hangups, failures, sins, doubts, we can get to where we're totally in despair.

But when I read Philippians 4:13, it says, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

That's true for us when we're trying to overcome the past, but I just want you to read it in context because reading verses out of context is like taking a prescription and using it incorrectly.

It can be dangerous.

When I engage in discussion with people who are definitely believers, but they get verse things out of source, you can put it down that somewhere a verse has been taken out of context and has confused them.

So I want you to, number one, know to read it in context, and number two, know how to get the most out of your Bible reading.

So we have the SOAP method.

That Philippians 4:10-20 in that bulletin insert is a guided tour through that passage.

I encourage you in the next week, take some time doing that passage.

Once you've done it, then go back and might not try through the whole book of Philippians.

If you need encouragement, Philippians is the book for you.

If you got teenagers in your house, they are now resident experts at Calvary about how to do the SOAP Bible study method.

This morning, I just kept saying, wow, look at these guys with these answers.

And they literally, I finally paused and I said, guys, you just literally wrote a sermon with your answers.

I could go take this, put it into a Roman numeral outline, and now I'm preaching.

Your kids did this with the SOAP Bible study method.

I want to encourage you, take time, spend time.

God's word is a prescription for life change.

And there's a simple way to do it.

I hope you're encouraged by that tool.

Finally, as Alex and the praise team comes for our final song of worship, I want you to know that if you have not yet put your trust in Jesus Christ, the moment you put your trust in Him, the Bible says you're born again.

And it is a treatment plan for not only to be made right with God, but also to have the things that are broken in us, the things that are out of alignment, the things that are hurting put back in order.

But it comes to the moment, first off, that you've recognized that you're a sin, that something's wrong, and your attempts to fix it have only made it worse.

And then put your trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who lived a sinless life, died on the cross for your sins, and rose again.

And when you do that, God begins to work mightily in you.

This morning, if you'd like to call on Jesus for salvation, you don't have to wait.

You can do it right there in your seats.

If you'd like me to pray with you to do that, come and find me.

I'll be up front.

If you want to talk about Believers' Baptism, love to talk with you about that.

Or maybe you want to join Calvary Baptist Church.

Today is a good day to make that public.

Please stand for our final song of worship.

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