



# MARCH MADNESS

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TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH  
VOTE ON WHAT PASTOR MATT  
TEACHES EACH WEEK.  
LOVE CHURCH

# WHY THIS SERIES MATTERS

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There are questions people are asking.

About God.

About suffering.

About sexuality.

About doubt.

About purpose.

And sometimes the loudest voices aren't the clearest ones.

Culture is discipling people every day.

Through podcasts.

Through social media.

Through silence.

If the church doesn't answer hard questions, culture will.

March Madness is not about arguments.

It's about clarity.

It's about creating space to ask real questions and anchor our lives in biblical truth.

A faith that avoids hard questions will not survive real life.

We are not here to win debates.

We are here to build lives on truth.

Pastor Matt Perry

Love Church

**"A faith that avoids hard questions will not survive real life."**

# WEEK 1

## HOW DO I BUILD A LIFE THAT HONORS GOD?

### FAITH IS NOT BUILT IN MOMENTS. IT IS BUILT IN PATTERNS.

Most people don't wake up trying to dishonor God.

But many drift.

Drift into distraction.

Drift into compromise.

Drift into comfort.

And over time, drift becomes direction.

So the real question isn't just:

Do I believe in God?

It's:

What kind of life am I building?

A life that honors God is not accidental.

It is intentional.

This week we open Romans 12 to answer clearly:

How do you build a life that honors God?

#### KEY SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:1-2

#### Book Recommendations:

- 1 The Pursuit of Holiness - Jerry Bridges
- 2 Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life - Donald S. Whitney
- 3 Celebration of Discipline - Richard Foster

**"A life that honors God is not accidental. It is intentional."**

# SERMON OUTLINE

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## A LIFE THAT HONORS GOD IS BUILT THROUGH MERCY, SURRENDER, AND RENEWAL.

### POINT 1

BUILD IT ON MERCY

Romans 12:1

Before Paul tells us what to do, he reminds us what God has done.

You don't build a life that honors God by trying harder.

You build it on mercy.

Sticky Line:

Mercy is the foundation. Obedience is the response.

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### POINT 2

OFFER YOUR WHOLE LIFE

Present your body as a living sacrifice.

Worship isn't a song you sing.

It's a life you surrender.

Sticky Line:

Half-commitment doesn't make sense in light of the cross

### POINT 3

RENEW YOUR MIND

Do not conform.

Be transformed.

Your life will follow your thinking.

Sticky Line:

Clarity comes after surrender and renewal.

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What part of my life is still off the altar?

Where am I thinking more like culture than Scripture?

Am I living from mercy or trying to earn approval?

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# HOW DO I BUILD A LIFE THAT HONORS GOD- TODAY?

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You don't build a God-honoring life in one big decision.

You build it in ordinary moments.

Not someday.

Today.

So what does honoring God look like before lunch?

Before your next meeting?

Before your next reaction?

Here's what it looks like in real life.

## 1 START YOUR DAY SURRENDERED, NOT SCATTERED

Before the noise.

Before the notifications.

Before the pressure.

Pause.

Even 60 seconds.

A life that honors God begins with orientation.

"God, today is Yours.

My decisions are Yours.

My reactions are Yours.

Lead me."

You don't need a 90-minute devotional.

You need intentional first moments.

What starts your day usually shapes your day.

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**Your direction is often set in your first decision.**

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## 2 HONOR GOD IN YOUR REACTIONS

Anyone can honor God when life is calm.

The test comes in irritation.

In traffic.

In conflict.

In disappointment.

In criticism.

Today, honoring God might look like:

Choosing patience when you want to snap.

Choosing humility when you want to defend yourself.

Choosing silence when gossip is easy.

Most spiritual growth happens in unplanned moments.

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**Your reactions reveal who is leading your life.**

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### 3 MAKE SMALL OBEDIENCE YOUR STANDARD

You don't need dramatic faithfulness.

You need consistent obedience.

Today that might look like:

- Telling the truth when exaggeration would be easier
- Working with integrity when no one is watching
- Closing the tab you know you shouldn't open
- Saying no to something that weakens your spirit
- Choosing generosity when you feel tight

A life that honors God is built through small, repeated yeses.

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**Big faithfulness is built through small daily obedience.**

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### 4 GUARD WHAT SHAPES YOUR MIND

Your inputs shape your life.

Today ask:

What is discipling me?

What voices are loudest?

What am I consuming?

What am I replaying in my head?

Honoring God today might look like:

Opening Scripture before social media.

Listening to truth instead of comparison.

Replacing anxiety with prayer.

If you don't intentionally renew your mind,

you will unintentionally conform.

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**What you feed grows.**

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### 5 END YOUR DAY WITH HONEST REFLECTION

Before you sleep,

ask two questions:

Where did I honor God today?

Where did I drift?

No shame.

No spiraling.

Just awareness.

Then receive mercy again.

Growth happens through reflection, not denial.

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**Formation requires attention.**

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## FINAL SECTION

Building a life that honors God is not dramatic.

It is daily.

It is ordinary.

It is intentional.

And it is fueled by mercy.

You don't need to change everything today.

You just need to honor Him in the next decision.

# WEEK 1 DEVOTIONAL

## BUILDING A LIFE THAT HONORS GOD

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### DAY 1 — REMEMBER MERCY

Romans 12:1

"In view of God's mercy..."

Devotional:

Before you do anything for God, remember what He has done for you.

You are not building a life to earn His approval.

You are building from approval already given.

Honor begins with gratitude, not guilt.

Reflection:

*Am I living today from mercy or trying to earn approval?*

### DAY 2 — PUT YOUR LIFE ON THE ALTAR

Romans 12:1

"Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice..."

Devotional:

A living sacrifice is not dramatic.

It is daily.

Today, honoring God may not feel emotional.

It may feel ordinary.

Surrender is rarely loud.

It is usually consistent.

Reflection:

*What part of my life needs to come back onto the altar today?*

**DAY 3 – REFUSE DRIFT**

Romans 12:2

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world...”

Devotional:

Conformity is subtle.

It rarely feels rebellious.

It feels normal.

But normal in culture is not always faithful in Christ.

Drift happens automatically.

Formation happens intentionally.

Reflection:

*Where have I slowly adopted patterns that don't reflect Jesus?*

**DAY 4 – RENEW YOUR MIND**

Romans 12:2

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Devotional:

Your thoughts shape your life.

What you rehearse in your mind becomes your direction.

Renewal is not self-help.

It is Spirit-help.

Open Scripture.

Invite correction.

Let God reshape your thinking.

Reflection:

*What truth do I need to replace a lie with today?*

## DAY 5 – HONOR GOD IN SMALL THINGS

Luke 16:10

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.”

Devotional:

You don't build a God-honoring life through big moments.

You build it through small faithfulness.

Integrity in private.

Kindness in stress.

Honesty in pressure.

God shapes your future through small obediences.

Reflection:

*What small act of obedience is in front of me today?*

## DAY 6 – LET OBEDIENCE CLARIFY YOUR FUTURE

Romans 12:2

“Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...”

Devotional:

Clarity follows surrender.

Many people wait for certainty before obedience.

But Scripture shows the opposite.

Obedience sharpens discernment.

Reflection:

*Am I waiting for clarity before obeying something I already know?*

**DAY 7 – BUILD SLOWLY**

Psalm 127:1

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.”

Devotional:

You are not building alone.

God is building with you.

Honor is not built in a weekend.

It is built over years.

Trust the slow work of God.

Reflection:

*Where do I need patience instead of pressure?*

God,

Help me build slowly and faithfully.

Remind me of mercy.

Teach me daily surrender.

Renew my mind.

Shape my life.

One decision at a time.

Amen.

**SMALL**  
**DAILY OBEDIENCE**  
**BUILDS**  
**A GOD HONORING LIFE**

## WEEK 2

# HOW DO I DISCOVER GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE?

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### Romans 8:28-29

Everyone wants to discover their purpose.

What am I meant to do?

What decision should I make?

What path should I choose?

But Scripture answers differently than culture.

Purpose is not self-discovery.

It is divine design.

Romans 8 tells us something massive:

God already has a purpose.

And if you belong to Him,  
you are already inside it.

You don't discover purpose by looking within.

You discover it by looking at Christ.

Your life is not random.  
It is rooted in eternal  
love.

### Book Recommendations:

- 1 The Call - Os Guinness
  - 2 Just Do Something - Kevin DeYoung
  - 3 Garden City - John Mark Comer
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### Transition line:

This week we answer the question clearly:

What is God's purpose, and how do I live inside it

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# WEEK 2

## SERMON NOTES

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### Romans 8:28-29

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."

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#### BIG IDEA

You don't discover God's purpose by looking within.

You discover it by looking at Christ.

#### 1 PURPOSE STARTS WITH GOD, NOT YOU

"Called according to His purpose."

The word for purpose is prothesis – deliberate plan, eternal intention.

Before you were born, God had an intention for your life.

Foreknew → Predestined → Called → Justified → Glorified.

"Foreknew" is relational love. Covenant love.

Purpose is not self-discovery.

It is divine design.

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**Your life is not random.**

**It is rooted in eternal love.**

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#### 2 PURPOSE IS CHRISTLIKENESS, NOT COMFORT

"Conformed to the image of His Son."

The word symmorphos means shaped into the same inner form.

Verse 29 defines the "good" of verse 28.

The good is not:

Success

Marriage

Healing

Platform

Comfort

The good is Christlikeness.

God's purpose is restoring the image of God in Christ.

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**God is not building your comfort.**

**He is building your character.**

**Or**

**The good God is working toward is not ease – it is resemblance.**

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### 3 PURPOSE IS FORMED THROUGH EVERYTHING

"In all things God works..."

Look at Romans 8:

Groaning

Weakness

Suffering

Waiting

Persecution

Not all things are good.

But all things are used.

Because of sovereignty, nothing is wasted.

Because of union with Christ, everything is formative.

Because of glorification, the story ends in completion.

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**Nothing in your life is wasted if you belong to Christ.**

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### CLOSING

How do you discover God's purpose?

Stop starting with yourself.

Start with God's eternal plan.

Understand that plan is Christlikeness.

Trust that every season is shaping you.

You don't need to find your purpose.

You need to follow Jesus.

Because if you follow Him, you will not miss what He already planned.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Am I starting with my desires or with God's design?

How might God be using this current season to shape Christlikeness in me?

What if the "good" God is working is not comfort – but character?

Where have I mistaken comfort for purpose

# WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MONDAY

You don't wake up Monday trying to "find your purpose."

You wake up asking:

How can I follow Jesus today?

Romans 8 makes it clear.

Purpose is not a mystery to solve.

It is a person to follow.

Here is what that looks like in real life.

## 1 Stop Waiting for a Big Reveal

Purpose rarely arrives as a dramatic moment.

It grows through daily obedience.

Monday purpose looks like:

Integrity at work.

Humility in conflict.

Excellence in small tasks.

Grace in hard conversations.

Purpose grows where obedience is practiced.

## 2 Let God Shape Your Character

Romans 8 says the goal is Christlikeness.

Not comfort.

Not status.

Not ease.

So ask:

Where is God shaping my patience?

Where is He refining my pride?

Where is He teaching me trust?

God is more committed to your character than your comfort.

## 3 Trust That This Season Is Not Wasted

Not all things are good.

But all things are used.

The delay.

The closed door.

The hidden season.

If you belong to Christ, nothing is wasted.

If you are becoming more like Jesus, you are living inside your purpose.

## FINAL SHIFT

Stop asking,

"What is my purpose?"

Start asking,

"How can I look more like Jesus today?"

Because according to Romans 8, that is the purpose.

And Monday is where it is formed.

# WEEK 2 DEVOTIONAL

## DISCOVERING GOD'S PURPOSE

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### DAY 1

Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him..."

Devotional

God is working even when you cannot see it. Purpose is not about perfect circumstances. It is about trusting that God is shaping you through them.

Reflection:

*Where do I need to trust that God is working right now?*

### DAY 2

Romans 8:29

"For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."

Devotional

The goal of your life is Christlikeness. Not comfort. Not status. Not applause. Becoming like Jesus is the purpose.

Reflection:

*How is God shaping me to look more like Jesus?*

**DAY 3**

Ephesians 2:10

"For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."

Devotional

You are not self-made. You are designed. Your life is intentional. God prepared good works for you long before you saw them.

Reflection:

*Do I live like my life is designed or random?*

**DAY 4**

Romans 12:2

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Devotional

Clarity comes through transformation. As your mind changes, your direction becomes clearer.

Reflection:

*What thought patterns need renewal?*

**DAY 5**

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."

Devotional

Purpose unfolds through trust. You do not need the full map. You need the next obedient step.

Reflection:

*What is my next faithful step?*

**DAY 6**

Psalm 37:23

"The Lord directs the steps of the godly..."

Devotional

God guides movement. Waiting faithfully and walking obediently both matter.

Reflection:

*Am I moving in obedience or frozen in fear?*

**DAY 7**

Hebrews 12:2

"Fixing our eyes on Jesus..."

Devotional

Purpose becomes clearer when your eyes stay on Christ. Follow Him closely and you will not miss what He has for you.

Reflection:

*What distracts me from fixing my eyes on Jesus?*

**Closing Prayer**

God,

Shape me before You send me.

Form my character before You expand my influence.

Help me trust that nothing in my life is wasted.

I want to follow You faithfully.

Amen.

**YOU DON'T FIND  
YOUR PURPOSE.  
YOU FOLLOW  
JESUS INTO IT.**

## WEEK 3

# HOW DO I FORGIVE SOMEONE WHO HURT ME?

### Ephesians 4:31-32

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Forgiveness sounds simple.

Until it's personal.

Until the betrayal.

The abandonment.

The broken trust.

The words you cannot unhear.

Forgiveness is not pretending it did not hurt.

It is choosing not to let it define you.

Ephesians 4 does not minimize pain.

It shows us how freedom works.

This week we answer honestly:

How do you forgive someone who truly hurt you?

Forgiveness is not saying it was okay.

It is saying it will not own me.

### Book Recommendations:

- 1 Total Forgiveness - R.T. Kendall
- 2 The Freedom of Forgiveness - David Augsburger
- 3 Forgiving What You Can't Forget - Lysa TerKeurst

# SERMON NOTES

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## Ephesians 4:31-32

### BIG IDEA

You don't discover God's purpose by looking within.

You discover it by looking at Christ.

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### Point 1

FORGIVENESS STARTS WITH REMEMBERING WHAT YOU RECEIVED

"Just as in Christ God forgave you."

Forgiveness is not rooted in the offender.

It is rooted in the cross.

We forgive from mercy, not from emotion.

Christ absorbed your debt.

Christ canceled your record.

You cannot withhold from others what Christ has poured over you.

### Point 2

FORGIVENESS IS A DECISION, NOT A FEELING

"Get rid of bitterness..."

Bitterness feels justified.

But it slowly poisons.

Forgiveness is not:

Forgetting

Trusting instantly

Removing boundaries

Pretending it did not hurt

Forgiveness is releasing the right to revenge.

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**Forgiveness sets you free before it sets them free.**

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### Point 3

FORGIVENESS BREAKS THE CYCLE

Unforgiveness keeps you tied to the wound.

Forgiveness does not excuse evil.

It entrusts justice to God.

Romans 12:19

"Leave room for God's wrath."

When you forgive, you step out of the courtroom.

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**Bitterness keeps you in the past. Forgiveness moves you forward.**

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**Closing**

How do you forgive someone who hurt you?

Remember what you've received.

Choose release, even when it's hard.

Trust God with justice.

Forgiveness may not change what happened.

But it changes what happens next.

**Reflection Questions**

What bitterness am I still carrying?

Have I confused forgiveness with reconciliation?

What would it look like to release this to God?

# THE PROCESS TO TRUE FORGIVENESS

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Forgiveness is not a switch you flip.

It is a process you walk.

When someone hurts you, the pain does not disappear because you decide to forgive. The memory may remain. The consequences may remain. The emotions may rise again.

True forgiveness is not pretending you are fine.

It is choosing freedom over control.

Here is what that process looks like.

## 1 Acknowledge the Wound Honestly

You cannot forgive what you refuse to name.

Minimizing the hurt does not make you spiritual.

It makes you stuck.

True forgiveness begins with honesty:

That hurt.

That betrayal.

That loss.

God cannot heal what you will not bring into the light

## 2 Remember the Mercy You Received

Ephesians 4 says, "Forgive as Christ forgave you."

You forgive not because they deserve it.

You forgive because you did not deserve mercy either.

The cross becomes the reference point.

Christ absorbed your debt.

Christ released you fully.

Forgiveness flows from remembering that you have been forgiven deeply.

## 3 Release the Right to Retaliate

Forgiveness is not a feeling.

It is a decision.

It is choosing not to punish them with silence, bitterness, or constant reminders.

It is stepping out of the courtroom and trusting God with justice.

Not all things are excused.

But they are surrendered.

**4 Repeat as Needed**

Forgiveness is rarely one moment.  
It is often daily obedience.  
When the memory resurfaces,  
you release it again.  
When resentment rises,  
you surrender it again.  
Freedom is not always instant.  
But it grows every time you let go.

**The Outcome**

True forgiveness does not change the  
past.  
It changes you.  
It softens your heart.  
It protects your future.  
It frees you from living chained to  
what happened.  
You forgive to be free.  
And freedom is worth the process.

# LEARNING TO FORGIVE

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## DAY 1

Ephesians 4:32

Devotional

Forgiveness flows from remembering how deeply you were forgiven.

Reflection

Do I truly understand the mercy I have received?

## DAY 4

Matthew 6:14

Devotional

Unforgiveness hardens the heart. Forgiveness softens it.

Reflection

What is bitterness doing to my heart?

## DAY 2

Colossians 3:13

Devotional

Your standard for forgiveness is not the offender's apology but Christ's grace.

Reflection

Am I waiting for something before I forgive?

## DAY 5

Psalms 34:18

Devotional

God is close to the brokenhearted. You are not alone in the pain.

Reflection

Have I brought this wound to God honestly?

## DAY 3

Romans 12:19

Devotional

God handles justice better than you ever could.

Reflection

Where am I trying to control justice?

## DAY 6

Hebrews 12:15

Devotional

Bitterness spreads. Forgiveness stops the infection.

Reflection

Is this wound affecting other relationships?

**DAY 7**

Luke 23:34

## Devotional

Jesus forgave at the height of injustice. His Spirit empowers you to do the same.

## Reflection

What step of obedience is God asking of me?

**Closing Prayer**

Jesus,

You forgave me at my worst.

Help me release what I am holding.

Heal what still hurts.

Teach me to trust You with justice.

Amen.

**FORGIVENESS IS  
FREEDOM**

# WEEK 4

## HOW DO I HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

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### John 10:27 (NLT)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

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Many people ask how to hear God's voice.

Is it audible?

Is it a feeling?

Is it a sign?

Is it a thought?

John 10 is not a technique passage.

It is an identity passage.

Jesus is not giving steps.

He is declaring relationship.

He is the Shepherd.

We are the sheep.

Hearing God is not about chasing volume.

It is about knowing the Shepherd.

Pull Quote

You hear God's voice not by chasing volume –

but by knowing the Shepherd.

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### Book Recommendations:

- 1 Hearing God - Dallas Willard
  - 2 Hearing God - Nathan Finochio
  - 3 Discerning the Voice of God - Priscilla Shirer
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# SERMON NOTES

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## John 10:27 (NLT)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

### BIG IDEA

You hear God's voice not by chasing volume, but by knowing the Shepherd.

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#### Point 1

HEARING STARTS WITH BELONGING

"My sheep listen to my voice..."

Hearing flows from relationship.

The word "listen" implies reception and response.

You don't hear God to become His.

You hear God because you are His.

Sticky Line

Belonging comes before clarity

#### Point 2

GOD'S VOICE IS RECOGNIZED

Sheep know the shepherd's voice through familiarity.

You learn His voice by staying close.

How?

Scripture

Prayer

Obedience

Community

## Hebrews 1:1-2 (NLT)

"Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son."

### 2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives."

The primary way the Shepherd speaks is through His Word.

Sticky Line

The clearer you know Scripture, the clearer you recognize His voice.

#### Point 3

GOD'S VOICE PRODUCES FOLLOWING

"I know them, and they follow me."

Biblical hearing results in obedience.

God's voice will:

Align with Scripture

Lead toward holiness

Produce Christlikeness

Require trust

It will not:

Contradict the Bible

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Justify sin  
Inflate ego  
Create chaos  
Sticky Line  
God's voice sounds like Jesus.

**Point 4**

## WHY WE STRUGGLE TO HEAR

Often the issue is not volume.  
It is noise.  
Busyness  
Anxiety  
Sin  
Distraction

**Psalm 46:10 (NLT)**

"Be still, and know that I am God!"

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Stillness sharpens sensitivity.

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**CLOSING**

How do you hear God's voice?  
Belong to the Shepherd.  
Stay close through Scripture.  
Obey what you already know.  
We often ask God to speak louder  
when He is waiting for us to obey  
what He already said.

# GOD'S VOICE IN A DISTRACTED WORLD

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We do not live in a silent world.

We live in a loud one.

Notifications.

Opinions.

Breaking news.

Algorithms.

Deadlines.

Endless scrolling.

In a distracted world, it is not surprising that we struggle to hear God.

The issue is rarely that God is silent.

The issue is that our lives are crowded.

## Noise Competes for Authority

Every voice wants something from you.

Your attention.

Your agreement.

Your reaction.

And over time, the loudest voices begin shaping your thinking.

But God's voice does not compete the way the world does.

It does not shout over chaos.

It invites stillness.

"Be still, and know that I am God."  
(Psalm 46:10, NLT)

Stillness is not weakness.

It is alignment.

## Distraction Dulls Sensitivity

The more noise we consume, the less sensitive we become.

Constant input trains us to react quickly, not listen deeply.

Hearing God requires something different:

Slowing down.

Opening Scripture.

Praying honestly.

Listening more than speaking.

The Shepherd's voice is not unfamiliar.

It is often just drowned out.

## **Closeness Creates Clarity**

Sheep recognize a shepherd's voice because they stay near him.

You do not learn God's voice by chasing mystical experiences.

You learn it by daily proximity.

Time in Scripture.

Time in prayer.

Time in obedience.

God has already spoken clearly in His Word.

The Spirit brings conviction, guidance, and clarity as we remain close.

Clarity is not usually dramatic.

It is steady.

## **What This Means for You**

If you want to hear God's voice:

Reduce the noise.

Increase the nearness.

Obey what you already know.

You do not need God to shout.

You need to stay close enough to recognize Him.

In a distracted world, the clearest voice belongs to the Shepherd.

Stay near.

**THE SHEPHERD  
STILL SPEAKS.  
STAY CLOSE.**

## WEEK 5

# WHY DOES GOD SEEM SILENT SOMETIMES?

### Psalm 13:1 (NLT)

"O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way?"

At some point, every believer asks it.

Why does God feel distant?

Why are my prayers unanswered?

Why is there no clarity?

Why does heaven feel quiet?

Silence can feel like absence.

But Scripture shows us something deeper.

God's silence is not always His absence.

Sometimes it is His invitation.

Psalm 13 shows us that even faithful people wrestle with divine quiet.

The question is not whether silence happens.

The question is what God is doing in it.

Pull Quote

God's silence is not abandonment.

It is often formation.

### Book Recommendations:

- 1 Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy - Mark Vroegop
- 2 Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering - Timothy Keller
- 3 Through the eyes of a Lion - Levi Lusko

# “WHY DOES GOD FEEL SILENT?”

## SHORT SERMON OUTLINE

### Psalm 13:1-2

“How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?”

### BIG IDEA

God’s silence does not mean God’s absence.

### 1 Silence Is a Real Biblical Experience

- Psalm 13 - “How long?” (4x)
- Psalm 22 - “Why have You forsaken me?”
- Job 23 - “I go forward... but He is not there.”
- Habakkuk 1 - “How long shall I cry for help?”
- Jesus on the cross - quoting Psalm 22

**Silence is not weak faith. It is relational honesty.**

Theological Insight:

Biblical lament is covenant language.

You don’t cry out to someone you don’t believe is there.

**Silence in Scripture is not the absence of faith – it’s faith asking questions.**

### 2 God Is Often Working When He Is Not Speaking

- Joseph in prison
- Job for chapters
- 400 years between Malachi and Matthew
- Jesus silent before Pilate

Romans 8:28 – God works even when unseen.

James 1 – Testing produces maturity.

Theological Insight:

God’s primary work is not information – it is transformation

**God may be silent – but He is never absent.**

### 3 Silence Deepens Trust

Psalm 13:5

“But I have trusted in Your steadfast love...”

Hebrew word: hesed – covenant love.

Nothing changed externally.

Something shifted internally.

**When you can’t hear His voice, trust His character.**

#### 4 The Cross Reframes Silence

The deepest silence in history  
was between Good Friday and  
Easter Sunday.

And it looked like defeat.

But it was redemption.

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**The silence of Saturday does not  
cancel the victory of Sunday.**

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#### Closing Moment

If you're in a silent season:

Don't interpret silence  
as abandonment.

Sometimes the Shepherd is quiet  
because He is teaching the sheep to  
walk by trust.

Even when you cannot hear Him –

He still hears you.

# “THE 400 YEARS OF SILENCE - AND GOD’S ANSWER”

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## BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

Book of Malachi ends with a promise of a coming messenger.

Then... silence.

For roughly 400 years between Malachi and the opening of

Gospel of Matthew,

there were no prophets. No new Scripture. No recorded words from God.

To Israel, it felt like heaven had gone quiet.

But history tells another story.

### What God Was Doing in the Silence

During those 400 years:

- The Greek Empire spread a common language (Koine Greek).
- The Roman Empire built roads across the known world.
- Synagogues were established throughout cities.
- Messianic expectation grew stronger.

When Jesus came, the world was more connected than ever.

The Gospel could travel quickly.

The Scriptures could be widely understood.

What felt like silence

was strategic preparation.

### And Then – God Spoke

John the Baptist steps into the wilderness declaring,

“Prepare the way of the Lord.”

Then:

Jesus Christ enters history.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says:

“In the past God spoke through the prophets...

but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.”

God did not break the silence with a whisper.

He broke it with a Person.

The answer to 400 years of silence was Jesus.

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### **What This Means For You**

If God feels silent in your life:

He may be preparing something bigger than you realize.

Silence is not emptiness.

It may be setup.

The cross proves this.

The tomb proves this.

Sunday always follows Saturday.

# WEEK 5 DAILY DEVOTIONS

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Theme: Trusting God in the Silence

## Monday - How Long?

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### Psalm 13:1 (NLT)

"O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever?

How long will you look the other way?"

David doesn't pretend. He brings raw emotion to God.

God is not intimidated by your questions.

He invites your honesty.

#### Reflection:

Where in your life are you asking, "How long?"

#### Prayer:

Lord, help me bring my honest questions to You instead of burying them. Even when I feel forgotten, remind me that You see me.

## Tuesday - I Still Trust

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### Job 23:8-10 (NLT)

"I go east, but he is not there.

I go west, but I cannot find him.

I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden.

I look to the south, but he is concealed.

But he knows where I am going.

And when he tests me, I will come out as pure as gold."

Job couldn't feel God - but he trusted that God still saw him.

Silence does not mean invisibility.

#### Reflection:

Can you trust that God sees you, even when you can't feel Him?

#### Prayer:

Father, even when You feel distant, help me remember that You know exactly where I am.

## Wednesday - God Is Still Working

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### Romans 8:28 (NLT)

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

God works in ways we cannot trace.

Silence does not cancel His sovereignty.

#### Reflection:

What situation in your life feels unfinished or confusing?

#### Prayer:

God, I don't see the whole picture, but I trust You are weaving something good.

## Thursday - Steadfast Love

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### Psalms 13:5 (NLT)

"But I trust in your unfailing love.

I will rejoice because you have rescued me."

Nothing changed around David.

But something changed within him.

"Unfailing love" is covenant love — loyal, committed, unbreakable.

#### Reflection:

What would it look like to trust God's love more than your feelings today?

#### Prayer:

Lord, anchor my heart in Your unfailing love, not in my shifting emotions.

## Friday - Jesus in the Silence

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### Matthew 27:46 (NLT)

"At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' which means 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'"

Even Jesus stepped into silence.

He entered it so you would never be ultimately abandoned.

#### Reflection:

How does knowing Jesus experienced silence change how you see your own?

#### Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for walking through silence so I would never walk alone.

## Saturday - The Quiet Tomb

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### Matthew 27:59-60 (NLT)

"Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth. He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left."

Saturday was quiet.

Heaven seemed silent.

But resurrection was coming.

#### **Reflection:**

Are you in a "Saturday" season right now?

#### **Prayer:**

Are you in a "Saturday" season right now?

## Sunday - I Will Sing

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### Psalm 13:6 (NLT)

"I will sing to the Lord because he is good to me."

David ends with worship before anything visibly changes.

Worship is faith before breakthrough.

#### **Reflection:**

What would it look like to praise God before you see the answer?

#### **Prayer:**

Lord, even in silence, I will sing.  
You are good to me.

# MARCH MADNESS - SERIES WRAP-UP

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## The Questions Were Never the Problem

Over the past few weeks, we asked big questions.

Hard questions.

Honest questions.

The kind of questions people are already asking – but sometimes are afraid to say out loud.

We talked about doubt.

We talked about silence.

We talked about pain, faith, relationships, identity, and trust.

And here's what we've learned:

God is not afraid of your questions.

He never has been.

All throughout Scripture, people wrestled.

David asked, "How long?"

Job asked, "Why?"

Habakkuk asked, "Where are You?"

Even Jesus cried out from the cross.

Questions are not rebellion.

They are often the beginning of deeper relationship.

## The Goal Was Never Just Answers

The goal of this series was never just information.

It was transformation.

It wasn't just to win an argument.

It was to win hearts.

Because Christianity is not built on perfect understanding.

It is built on a perfect Savior.

And when we bring our hardest questions to God, something happens:

Faith grows roots.

Trust deepens.

Confidence shifts from our understanding to His character.

## If You're Still Wrestling

Maybe you don't have every answer.

That's okay.

Faith is not having every answer.

Faith is choosing to trust the One who does.

You don't have to understand everything to follow Jesus.

You just have to take the next step.

And here's the truth we've seen over and over again:

When you can't trace His hand,  
you can trust His heart.

When you don't hear His voice,  
you can trust His character.

When the game feels intense,  
remember – the victory is already secured.

## The Final Word

March Madness reminds us that moments feel dramatic.

Buzzer beaters.

Upsets.

Unexpected turns.

But our faith is not built on moments.

It's built on the cross.

And the cross tells us this:

God is not distant.

God is not silent forever.

God is not absent.

He is near.

He is working.

He is faithful.

And no matter what question you walked in with...

Jesus is still the answer.