

Covenant: Knowing God's Covenant
Lesson 4 Video, Wayne Barber (57:40)
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The Language of Commitment, Part 1

- A. Belt
A commitment to lend strength to your covenant partner.
- B. Commitment
 - 1. Who we are
 - 2. Whose we are
 - 3. God has the right to take our physical life. Death is the penalty for breaking covenant.

Introduction

"Now, Behold. I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you."
Genesis 9:9

"I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth." Genesis 9:13

"And He took a cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:27-28

"Like a lamb that is lead to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth." Isaiah 53:7

Video

Does God really have a right to tell me what to do? That's what we're going to be talking about tonight is the area of commitment. We've been talking about identity but tonight we're going to start talking about commitment in the area of covenant.

Now, go back to 1 Samuel chapter 18; we'll just keep this in our minds. And one of the rules we've talked about before we need to keep reminding ourselves of, is when we discover the ritual of covenant from any culture, don't try to cram the Scripture into that. You let it fit into Scripture where it fits. Let it fall where it falls. Scripture is the norm.

1 Samuel chapter 18. Let's read together verse 1, verse 3, and verse 4, this covenant of Jonathan and David. It says in verse 1:

1 Sam 18:1, 3 [reads]

- 1 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.
- 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. NASB

Now, we see those three things in verse 4. First of all,

1 Sam 18:4

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe . . .
NASB

Now in the area of identity, who we are in Christ, that's a valid subject to look at, sometimes rather imbalanced. We'll talk about that in a moment. We see the exchange of robes. That has to do with identity. We've talked about that. Then he goes on. He says that he gave him the robe. Then he says with this armor. He gave him his weapons as the exchange of weapons. We looked at those two things in our last session.

Then he says, including his sword and his bow and his belt. We didn't get to the belt the last time we were together. And even though we're not going to camp out on identity tonight, let's go back and pick that up and we'll move right on into our lesson on commitment tonight.

What does it mean to exchange the belts? I don't know if in any of your study you came across it but there are two kinds of belts that we find in Scripture. One was one which they wore into battle. It was a wide metal type of belt that protected the stomach area, the lower trunk area. This was a piece of armor, basically. But it was called a belt.

Then there was a leather belt that they would wear. Of course, you talk about people girding up their loins. They'd take those long robes and pull them up and tuck them under a belt. And that was what they would wear their weapons on. They would carry their weapons on.

And so what this had to do with was in the area of sharing each other's strength. In other words, you could depend on me to help you in the sense of strength and I could depend on your strength to help me. We see this in a covenant relationship we have with the Lord Jesus Christ. Really, when you think about it, even though we give Him our abilities, He's already given them to us first. It's not so much that He wants my ability, He wants my availability. But you can see this interchange in our covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the place you get a truer picture of this in our relationship with Jesus, is in His giving us His strength. That's the key. He gives us all the strength we need to rely upon as we walk in covenant with Him.

And with that thought in mind, turn with me to Philippians chapter 4. We're studying this right now in our church so it's fresh on my mind. But the fourth chapter of Philippians, let's just talk, just for a moment, how in a covenant relationship since we

have exchanged belts, this exchange of belts is a clear commitment to give strength to our covenant partner. Let's see how the Lord Jesus honors that in our walk with Him. He says in verse 13 of Philippians chapter 4:

Phil 4:13 [reads]

13 I can do all things through [whom?] Him who strengthens me. NASB

Now, there are two words for power in that verse. The word *ischuo* is the first word that's used. I can do all things. I used to go down and visit at a SPA. I was not really a visitor, I was a member, but they thought I was a visitor. They looked at me and knew that I couldn't have come there very often. I'd go to the SPA and one of the things I used to enjoy was in the locker room when they would have their shower. And they would stand up there and use the brushes and the way they would do it was unique. I'd never seen anything like this before. They would flex as they were brushing their hair. And I was with my youth director and both of us, we didn't have the nerve to walk in front of a mirror. I had great swellings in my body! But anyway, we watched them.

Boy, they'd just stand there, and we'd get just so tickled, you know, and if you'd ask them, "Can you do, or can you do this?" Well, sure they can. That's the word *ischuo*. I can do all things. That's the word we would use. I can do it in my own power, but Paul says, no. I can do all things, *ischuo*, through Christ who strengthens me. The word "strengthen" there is not the same word. It's the same *endunamoo*, it's the word *endunamoo*. It's the word for power that has to be received from an outside source.

And so he's saying, "Yes, I can do all things in your eyes, but let me tell you where that strength comes from. It comes from the Lord Jesus Christ who lives in me, who is strengthening me." And there's a picture of how God honors that particular commitment with us as we walk in covenant with Him. As I give Him my energies and everything else and He just imparts to me His strength, His power, then He enables me. That's His covenant commitment to me that He will lend me His strength.

And if you study chapter 4 of Philippians, you see so many things. Verses 1, 2, and 3, He gives us the strength to stand firm in the Lord. And you cannot do it apart from His strength. Thank God we're in covenant. And thank God that He who promised is faithful; He honors His part of the covenant.

In verse 4, we can rejoice always, always. The word "always" is what people like to lift out of that verse because God's chosen have a certain season they rejoice. You know, we don't realize we

can rejoice always. There's no time . . . Why? Because God's strength is within us.

1 Sam 18:5

5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. NASB

And then in verse 5, we have a forbearing spirit. We have strength to be forbearing. By the way, do you know what the word "forbearing" means? Let me simplify it for you. It means to be treated in a bad way but to have absolutely no malice or bitterness. That's because you've been treated that way. There's no word in English or in the Latin vocabulary that comes near understanding this Greek word. The word forbearing: gracious, kind, longsuffering. But when somebody treats me wrong I have no bitterness back towards them. "That's the person who's forbearing. Are you forbearing?" "Well, brother Wayne, I can't do that." That's right. You're in covenant with God! Thank Him. You have no more excuse. He's promised to you He'll give you His strength to be forbearing to others.

And then it goes on. Goodness, gracious, we could take the whole chapter, but the key here is when you exchange belts, it's a clear commitment to lend strength to a covenant partner. Both belts that we see in Scripture, obviously, are a picture of that strength. And so we lend strength to one another. Obviously, He does it so much more than my ability; He wants my availability. But thank God He gives me all of His strength to operate on in my covenant walk.

Well, I know I hit that fast, but that's because I know where I'm going and I want to get out of that identity thing and move into the next area.

Now, all we've been talking about so far is related to who, to who we are in Jesus Christ. Who are we? Who we are in Christ. You know, it's interesting, there's balance to every truth in Scripture. And so many people get hung up in what we've talked about so far and they don't want to go any further. "Tell me who I am in Jesus Christ."

In 1988, listen, psychologists, psychiatrists, everybody's got a hold of this thing: find out who you are. Have a good self-image. Boy, find out who you are. Operate out of who you are. The problem is with that, it's always from God to us and there's never nothing from us back to God, you see. And it's imbalanced. You cannot live on the truth of who you are in Jesus Christ. You've got to go a step further. Because in this truth of who you are there's absolutely no accountability from me to Him. All the accountability is from Him to me. We never think

about it in the proper perspective. I think we're all out of balance.

The second part of that truth is whose we are. That's what we're going to start looking about is commitment. Not only who we are, but whose we are. And for people who are trying to find out this [who] end of it, it's fine. Once you find that out, that's wonderful. But you'd better study this part of it [whose] or you'll never understand the balance of a covenant relationship with the living God. Okay.

Covenant demands accountability. And the accountability is not just from God to us, it's also from us back to God. We're going to be held accountable in our covenant commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not going to just be who we are, it's going to be whose we are. As a matter of fact, the more I've understood about the second part, I don't even talk about who I am anymore. I'd rather talk about whose I am and let Him talk about who I am. Because it helps me in a more healthy walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not going to get off that. I'm going to stay with it, all right?

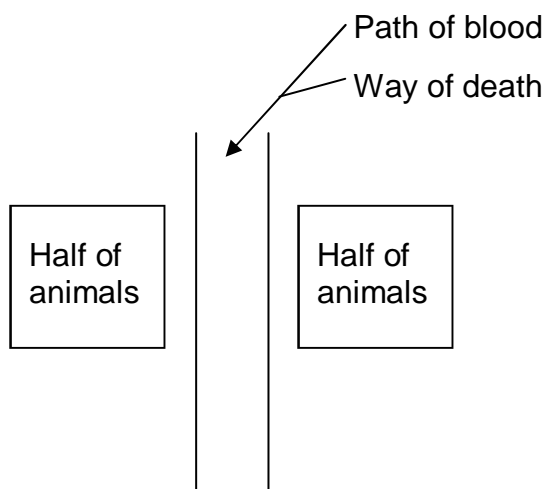
That's what I like about this group. Because a lot of people who are going around today giving you a list of things, "And I have done it," and it's wonderful if you understand the balance of it. But people getting up in the morning confessing who they are in Jesus Christ, and that's wonderful folks, if you recognize that who you are only operates when you discover whose you are. You've got to know the difference. You can talk to yourself until you're blue in the face saying, "I am the righteousness of God." He says that about us. But if you don't understand how that's appropriated in your life, it's a dead-end street. Because the outer working of that is not practical. It

doesn't happen in our everyday experience. So, who we are, that's wonderful, the identity part of covenant. But whose we are, this is what we're going to deal with as we get into the commitment side of covenant.

Well, covenant is a serious matter. And I'm sure you found that out this week as you studied your homework. Wow! When I was going through it, I thought, Yaaa! You know, when I first got saved nobody told me this stuff. Did anybody tell you this stuff? And all of a sudden you think, "What have I gotten myself into?!" It's good to go back and recheck it. Make sure you got yourself into it to begin with. I mean, look, we talked about this week God has the right to take our life, physically. In a moment He can snuff it out because of the seriousness of covenant. You see, when you enter into covenant you bind yourself to Someone. You lose your right to independent living. You enter into that oneness. And this is the, if we don't understand this you're going to mess up on truths you find all through the New Testament.

As a matter of fact, many statements of God makes Him appear as if He's a tyrant or something. Some big iron, uncaring God that has a club trying to get everybody. No, no. He's just a God that understands covenant. The problem with us is that we don't understand it. And we can't seem to put together some of the truths we find in the Word of God.

Now, as we studied we talked about in our lesson, the halving of the animals. They would lay one half on this side [see diagram below] and of course, that's with the covenant with Abraham, and it goes



all the way through. And they would lay half on this side. And this particular area right here [the middle area between the animals] I found it called two different things. One, is the path of blood. I know this sounds kind of gory. But remember what Leviticus tells us about the blood? What's in the blood? Life is in the blood. And it's very costly to enter into covenant.

Well, not only is it called the path of blood, it's also called the way of death. And as we look at that, and especially the covenant that God cut with Abraham in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, we find that there was something that happened inside of these two halves of animals that had been split apart. The people who were making covenant . . . You know, I've been trying to get a married couple to do this for me and they won't do it. I don't know what we'd kill, but we could find a butcher somewhere and we could just borrow a couple halves of meat and lay it down. And you know, and get the bride to wear a red dress because I guarantee you it wouldn't last white very long, and walk in and stand between those two halves. That's the way they did it back in this day. They understood what we're talking about. It's kind of gross to us in our culture, but they would stand in that way of death or that path of blood. They'd put their arms together. I can't get into that or I'll pre-empt everything we're going to be studying in a few weeks, and they would say their vows to one another.

Now, let me ask you a question. Do you think that they thought that might be a serious vow that they're saying to each other? Because when they finished saying their vows as we study them, the history of culture, of covenant, we find that they would point to God in heaven and they would point to those halves of meat, as you saw in your lesson this week, and they would say, "God, if I ever break this covenant, do this to me or worse." And you begin to understand death is the penalty for breaking covenant. Woo!

Well, if I'm going to enter into covenant with somebody, I'm going to have to check them out for a while. You know, you begin to understand just a little bit more the issue of salvation now, don't you? Jesus said, "Count the cost, count the cost, count the cost." Why would He say something like that?

"Why, I felt emotional. The choir was singing, I ran down the aisle, prayed a bunch of prayers, and my tears came down on my face. Surely I'm saved." Not necessarily. What did you do, buy an insurance policy or did you bow down before a living God and enter into a oneness, a covenant with Him?

Now, this is why we have to be so careful in how we present the claims of the gospel. And what happens

to a lot of people is they didn't understand the seriousness of what they were doing. Jesus said, "What man would build a building without first of all sitting down and counting the cost? What army would go out against 20,000 with only 10,000 without first of all sitting down and counting the cost?"

Think about what you're doing. Make sure you understand you're not just getting into heaven. Heaven's getting into you. You're not just receiving a Person, you're also committing to a way. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." There is a lifestyle now to be backed up by what you're doing when you enter into the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in this way of death, in this path of death, they would say their vows and then say, "God do this to me or worse if I ever break this covenant." Death was the penalty for breaking a covenant.

Have you ever wondered about the Law? What right does God have to condemn all of us by the Law? You know, Paul said, "I was once alive without the Law, and then the Law came and what happened? Sin revived. And I what? died! Death immediately. When the Law came . . ." You see, Paul, one day was just doing fine. Coveting, although he didn't know it was coveting. And one day the Law came and said, "Thou shalt not covet." And he says, "Oh! I'd better stop!" And so, he got up the next morning and said, "I will not covet." And thirty minutes later: covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet, covet! He's already broken the covenant!

Now, what's the penalty of that? Death. Now, does God have right to do that? Does He have a right to take a law, Him giving the law, and then condemn people with it? Let's just find out if He has a right or not.

In your study, let's look at Exodus chapter 24. Now, you looked at that this past week. Did you ever understand how the Law came about? And what God was doing there? Matter of fact, I'm saying this just as Wayne talking, obviously. You can read between the lines and check me out, but to me, I just get the feeling God set these people up. They're supposed to know better. They know what covenant's all about. Watch this, in Exodus chapter 24, verse 1. He says in verse 1:

Ex 24:1-3 [reads]

1 Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance.

2 Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him."

3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; [now, watch this] and all the people answered with one voice, and said, [watch this now, they're going to covenant with God, right here] "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" NASB

Dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb. Do you see what they're doing? They are entering into covenant. Now, listen. They may be taking this lightly. Does God take it lightly? No way, folks. God is a covenant keeping God. Now watch what happens!

Ex 24:4-8 [reads]

4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar [because why is he going to build an altar? What's going to have to happen before they can have that covenant? There's got to be a sacrifice, correct? So he builds an altar] at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

5 And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD.

6 And Moses took [now, watch this now] half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; [it's like Moses is saying, "Okay, guys, it is set up, we are fixing to enter into covenant." They understood that language whereas in America, today, we're having a hard time with this. This is not our culture. And so they understand this. "Are you ready guys? I'm reading it to you again. Are you listening?"] and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" [so watch this]

8 So Moses took the blood [okay guys, you've made your vow and you've done it in the presence of God] and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the [what?] covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these [what?] words." NASB

Their vows, as what they would do, was their basis of making that covenant. And then it says, verse 11, and the last part of it:

Ex 24:11 [reads]

11 . . . and they beheld God, and they ate and drank.
NASB

And I'm pre-empting a little bit, because way on down the list you're going to find a covenant meal and you'll see that real significant in the New

Covenant in the New Testament. I just said that to whet your appetite, all right?

So what's happened here is that the people have entered into covenant with a sacred God. What's the penalty for breaking covenant? Death! Now, what have they done? They have said, "God, You give me Your words and we will do whatever You say to do." And immediately, probably before they got off the mountain, they'd already broke their covenant with God.

Now, the Law had done what to them? It had condemned them. Did God have a right? You'd better believe He had a right. Because they entered into covenant and covenant is sacred; covenant is a binding agreement and death is the penalty for ever breaking it. Aren't you glad we're under a better covenant, a new covenant, with Him? But we'll get to that later on. Hang on right now. Some of you are looking at me, "Quit Wayne, you keep pre-empting all this stuff." I can't help it! All right.

The people had bound themselves to God. Death was the penalty for breaking the covenant. All right?

Let's go to a second example. Now you begin to understand. Look in Jeremiah chapter 22. And if some of this overlaps what we've studied, that's all right. Jeremiah 22, 5 through 9.

Boy, some people just pick up the Old Testament, say, "Let's see what God's like." And they pick up one of these passages where He just burns them out, and they say, "Good grief! God's a mean God!" Well, wait a minute. If they understood covenant, God's not a mean God. He understands it very well. Verse 5:

Jer 22:5-9 [reads]

5 "But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself," declares the LORD, "that this house will become a desolation." " [Good grief! I thought He was a loving God. Well, He is.]

6 For thus says the LORD concerning the house of the king of Judah: "You are like Gilead to Me, Like the summit of Lebanon; Yet most assuredly I shall make you like a wilderness, Like cities which are not inhabited.

7 "For I shall set apart destroyers against you, Each with his weapons; And they will cut down your choicest cedars And throw them on the fire.

8 "And many nations will pass by this city; and they will say to one another, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this great city?'

9 "Then they will answer, [now, watch this carefully] 'Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.'" NASB

Is covenant serious? You better believe it's serious. Does God have a right if we violate the covenant to snuff out our life just like that? Of course a lot of these things, remember, we're going to build on them. Don't you take each one of these as the whole. We're going step by step by step. And you saw it in your homework this past week. Death is that penalty. And God has every right if we're going to break that covenant to take away our life. Covenant requires accountability.

Now, Hebrews 8:6 says we're in a better covenant, a better covenant. And because we're in that better covenant, Jesus has become the sacrifice. Now, let me just hopefully not pre-empt you too much, but He's become the sacrifice. Hebrews says He's now the living way. He is the way that we enter in. How? By the way of death. We die to our self. We enter in through Him into covenant with a living God.

Now, we're accountable to Him and He's made Himself accountable to us. It's a relationship. Christianity is a whole lot more than having your name on a church role. It's being in a oneness of relationship with a living God, made possible by His Son who opened the door and became the sacrifice to let us come in the way of death. And we are accountable.

Now, with that in mind, just to give you that background, look with me at Romans chapter 12, Romans chapter 12.

You know, it's not going to take me long before I have to get real practical, all right? Sometimes I get lost with all the big words and I don't know how, let's just get us down, let us just see how well you're walking in covenant tonight.

Do you believe that God has a right to tell you what to do in your personal Christian walk? And of course a lot of this we haven't studied. But you know that in Hebrews it says that the covenant He left with us was vowed after He died. Remember He said a testament is only good after the one who gave it has passed on? Well, what that's saying to us is that covenant God gives to us already has its terms and they're fixed. And when we enter in we understand His terms. We don't change it and we don't bargain with Him. They're there and therefore we must walk according to that and of course, that's basically summed up in the Word of God, and being filled with the Spirit of God. But look at Romans chapter 12 and let's talk about this in a very personal way.

It took me years to understand this. I'm just hoping that somebody gets into this course that's a brand new believer. And we can shortcut a lot of misery in their life so that they can understand that when they get in what it's all about. I wish somebody would

have gotten through my thick head what this was all about when I first entered into that marvelous covenant with the living God.

Look what he says. Paul says:

Rom 12:1-2 [reads]

1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [and then he goes on in verse 2]

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB

You know, we're all accountable to a living God. We're not only accountable for what's taking place in our spiritual life with Him, our spirit and His Spirit united together. We're accountable for how we live in our physical life, our physical bodies. And Paul is urging the people to understand that we're to put our bodies now as the living sacrifice. He's already made way for us to enter into covenant. But part of this means that if I'm in covenant with the living God, He's got His terms, which is His Word, than I must walk in obedience to that Word. And that's going to mean a change of lifestyle.

This completely wipes out people who have their name on a church role but no life to back it up. Absolutely. Because if a person truly is a branch there's going to be fruit someplace in his life. Why? Because he's adhering to covenant. God has a right to dictate his lifestyle. And there are so many people that are repulsed by that. But if they just understood covenant, they would understand and to realize the heavy penalty for a person not doing what God tells him to do.

I want to give you a little bit of my testimony tonight. Let's talk about right now, what's my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? What's your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you just go to church three times a week and claim to be really spiritual and be what God wants you to be? No way. Well, I used to think that you could. Matter of fact, I was a spiritual offertory prayer giver. I was on a staff of a church; I wasn't a pastor at the time. And they asked me to do the offertory prayers. Boy, I used to practice those things and I was good at it. Had little old ladies walk up and just tell me how sweet I prayed every time I prayed at church.

Man, if they knew some of the things that was in my mind and some of the things, some of the desires that was controlling me they'd have died of a heart attack right there on the spot. Because you see, as far as my spirit was concerned I believed that I had entered in and I believed I was eternally secure. But as far as my life, daily, moment by moment with my

family and my personal walk with the Lord, man, it was far from being what it needed to be. But I didn't really worry about it because I had heard somebody teach that it didn't matter because when you get to heaven it's all going to be pie in the sky by and by. It's going to be all right. God's already taken care of all that.

I used to claim 1 John 1:9 all the time. Well, if you just get into trouble just ask God to forgive you and it's okay. You can go back and do the same thing again. I mean, it's automatic what God has done for you. That's the way I came up, folks. Maybe you had a whole lot better teaching than I did, I hope you did.

But, one day it began to hit me right between the eyes that I might have taken this covenant lightly as Israel did, but God didn't. And I began to recognize what He required out of my life. And I began to see the seriousness of what this is to be in a relationship with Him. And these two verses, Romans 12, actually verse 1, was the thing that transformed and turned my life completely around.

I want to go back and share some of the things that happened to me. I went from ignorance to arrogance real quick, by the way. But I began to wake up and realize how much more there was to the Christian life and I honestly wonder if that wasn't when I got saved. When I get to heaven one day God's going to tell me all that. I know I am now. I'm not worried about the rest of it. But when I began to see the seriousness of this thing, and it began to overcome me.

Well, I began to think that I've got to get more knowledge, thinking that would make me spiritual. And the more knowledge I got the more repulsive I got. Because people didn't want to get around me because I had an answer for everything. I didn't realize that what makes us spiritual is when we start honoring God's covenant and we start walking under the demands He's put on our life and we start putting that robe on and we start exchanging in that identity and then we start walking in that way of death daily to self and allowing Him to be everything He wants to be on our life. We fulfill our commitment to Him; He fulfills His commitment back to us. And that's what that covenant oneness is all about.

Well, like I said, I'm thick. But I knew that some sins were wrong: lusting, you know, if we had to name five sins right now, I want you to name just like that! But I didn't recognize that my whole life, at that particular point, was out of gear. A lot of things were wrong in my life.

And you know what's always bugged me? Is it . . . I know God has a right to dictate my lifestyle, but the

thing that bugs me is when He starts meddling on things I like to do and there's nothing wrong with them. Now, don't you tell me there is! That's what bugs me. I mean, it's okay if God gets on my case about an immoral thing that's on my mind. I know that's wrong so I have to confess it. Or if I have bitterness in my heart and I have to confess it, that's okay. But don't get on me about the things that I know that are good and I certainly deserve to do because I'm working hard enough as it is to try to keep my family going and to be the person God wants me to be.

And God had to really take me to the cleaners. I love the way He works with us and how He deals with us. With gentleness and longsuffering. Boy, He's got to have a sense of humor anyway, to put up with me all these years.

One of the things that I love to do more than anything else, and many of you have heard me share this. But that's all right. Just act like you haven't, just look at me like [intake of breath]. And one of the things that I love to do more than anything else in the world that was a real problem in my life, and here's where it hits the wheel tonight folks, it's where you're thinking right now, "Don't you dare mention what I'm thinking you're going to mention. 'Cause I'm not about to be with you!" Bingo! That's when He's got you right there.

Well, I love to bass fish. That was my pet thing. Now, what is wrong with bass fishing? I mean, can't . . . that's right! We'll go Saturday! That's what I began to think! You know, you get out in the, course I love to do it. And you hear these guys all the time. "Well, Wayne, sorry I couldn't make it to church but I, well, God and me had wonderful time out in the boat." Watch my lips [thbbb]. I was at work! But I love to bass fish. That was the thing I like to do more than anything else; that was my spiritual time alone with God.

I used to come up with all kinds of ideas why I needed to go. Especially when I found out my covenant walk that I was to be really concerned about my brother. And God would beat that concern within me and I would ask him to go fishing. And I would tell my wife, "I need to take this ol' boy fishing. This ol' boy's not walking in the Lord right and I need to take him out this weekend. You know it is."

I could always tell. She knew me. And I didn't talk to him about the Lord. I just fussed with him when the boat would turn sideways in the shallow water and I had to throw over him. That's the only time I'd ever talk to him.

And I just wanted to go fishing. I would use any means, at any time to go fishing. Well, like I said,

the Lord had a way of getting through to me and here I am trying on the one hand trying to understand my relationship to Him but on the other hand, absolutely hard as a rock when it came to certain things, particularly my bass fishing.

Now, folks, it doesn't go that way. And God has a right to take anything out of our life if it will bring us back into covenant and that walk with Him. He has a right. "Oh, He does not." Yes, He does.

What did you do when you bowed down and received Him? What did you pray? "God, I want to go to heaven?" Well you'd better go back and get saved. Or did you bow down and confess Him as Lord? And confess yourself to be a sinner and did you receive Him in to be the Lord and Master of your life? Then you begin to understand. Well, if He's calling the shots He's got a right to call whatever He wants to call.

Well, I used to plan my camps, I was in youth work at the time, around places that had good places to fish. And I've been forgiven, leave me alone. I would. The first thing I'd look at was not the facilities, who cares? Man, they're kids; they sleep on the floor. I'd look at the lake. How many fish'd come out of it?

I remember that when God finally got around to dealing with me of His absolute right to do whatever He wanted to do in my life it was in Lumberton, Mississippi. There was a camp down there that I had heard about several big bass caught out of it. One twelve pounds. Course, they were fishermen that told this, maybe it was perch for one of them. But, we had planned the camp to go to that place.

I always get a speaker. Because if you get a speaker then you don't have to fool with preparing for everything and he can do it. And if you get counselors to take care of the kids you can get a week's vacation and get paid for it and catch a lot of fish. You have to think these things out.

So we loaded all the kids up on two great big busses and we went down to Lumberton, Mississippi. And we got there and kind of fanned all the kids out and you have to look real organized, too. You've got to do this right. I had 'em all organized, boy, dot, dot, here's the rules, you better do this, you'd better do that, you know? Sent them off to their rooms, you know, and as soon as they were gone: Pew! Boy, I'd go! And I went down to the lake, got in the little boat. A friend of mine and I got in the boat and we went out to fish for a little while.

Well, folks, before supper I had one fish in the boat. I know it was over six pounds. I know I had some big . . . I thought, "What a week this is going to be!

Oh Lord, it's going to be a great week!" Isn't it amazing the difference?

And so that first night the guy spoke and I couldn't wait for him to finish because I wanted to hurry up and get to bed so I can get up early the next morning and go fishing.

The next morning we got up, we got down to the lake and if you don't like to bass fishing, you're going to miss this a mile, but if you like to bass fish you're always . . . But when we got down there, you can almost smell a big bass. You can feel them. They're around you. You know they're there. It's like ooh! And you're heart's going; you know you're going to get one. We looked down in the shallow water and you could see these big ol' swirls just, wump, wump. I thought . . . get in the boat! Get in the boat! Well, we went out that morning and we caught, we caught some. We caught a couple or three. And we, but that was all. They just quit. We thought, "Well, what's wrong? Man, there's big fish in this thing."

Well, when we went back in and it just hit me about mid-morning that I figured out the problem. There was a full moon that week. And those rascals were biting at night. Now again, you got to have the fever to understand all this, see? I'm thinking, whew, son! We're going to catch some tonight. So we went out bought some musky jitterbugs. That's what they're called: musky jitterbugs. They're joined in the middle and they're huge, get black, because at night with a full moon see those . . . And they come across the lake kawonga, kawonga, kawonga, kawonga, kawonga, you know, a top the water. And the bass will come 400 yards to hit the thing. And if he misses it he'll sink your boat. So we knew we had the plug. So we had a big ol' sack full of those musky jitterbugs and we're all black and ready to go.

So that night you have to act like everything's going well. You go through the service, you know, smile, say, "Amen." Spiritual, pat everybody on the back, pray. And then get them to bed, you see.

One o'clock we finally got to bed. Two o'clock we got up. Isn't it amazing what you'll do when you're not in covenant with the Lord and feel good about it? But we went down to the lake and got ready to go fishing. And I mean, a big truck pulls up.

The night watchman of the place. And he says, "What you guys gonna do?" Golf, you know! What do you think we're gonna do? Boy, he's a real bright guy! I'd like to see the test they gave him to pass to get that job! I say, "We're gonna go fishing, what do you think we're gonna go do?" And he says, "Well, I'm sorry, but you can't fish." "What do you mean we can't fish?" He says, "Well, our insurance

doesn't cover you after sundown and before sun up."

Boy, this gave a real test to see if the Lord really lived in us, 'cause I thought of several things. Putting the guy in a sack and you know, praying for him at the bottom of the lake or something. And I, well, we argued and argued and everything else. We said, "We got our own insurance." "That doesn't matter. You can't fish."

Well, being the mature Christians we were, we'd been to the seminar, we're spiritual, we're mature in that. Like taking a Precept course, you know, spiritual! Oh, go away. Well, since we were so spiritual, instead of going back to bed, we sat out under a street light and we waited for it to get dawn. Four hours or so. Sitting there, lying about fish we'd lost and stuff like that. Redoing the line on the thing. Going through our tackle box, rearranging lures and things like that. Well, finally it got light enough we could see the boat. We thought, "That's daylight." So we went fishing.

Well, you know how camps are. All day long, no sleep. Remember one hour's sleep that's all we had so far. Remember it talks in the Old Testament giving your leftovers to God? Isn't it incredible when God says, "I expect everything out of you." That's covenant.

Well, all day long: Frisbee, Bible study, softball. I mean all day. Finally we got to the service that night. I'm in twilight zone, folks. I'm gone. I don't know where I am. I've had one hour sleep. I've been playing all day long with these kids. So far, it's good as long as you're running or something. But when you sit down you're just dead in the water, like some of you are on Tuesday. You just go. And here I am in the service thinking, "How'm I going to make it through this service?" And you try your best to work things out. You gotta think: try to rest your head on your arm and close your eyes like you're praying. People do that! You know, just kind of, real serious. And hope that you can fall asleep before your arm falls off the thing. The whole service goes by and man, my eyes felt like they had ten pound sandbags on them. And I couldn't hold 'em open. And I'd try, the guy's talking, you try to hold them open.

Well, he finished the message and gave the invitation and I, you have to act like you're a part of this and I haven't heard a word he said, the guy who's speaking.

All of a sudden it was like the Holy Spirit just fell on that whole place. People started getting saved. I'm talking about not this emotional stuff. People really started having a visitation of the Lord in their own lives and really having seen the truth. God really

ministered that night. God really showed me that night, by the way, He didn't need me. Because He could certainly work a part from me. And He'd definitely done it that night.

Well, I get down on my knees beside the table. I mean, I'm going to get in on this thing. I don't want to miss anything. Here's what I did. I got down and started to pray. Now, I'm praying silently, and I'm, "Oh Lord, bless these young people." 'Cause I'm spiritual! I don't need to be blessed. I've been to the seminar. "Lord, bless these young people." And boy, it was just like the Lord just broke into that thing and said, "Hey, Wayne! Hey Wayne! Hey! Hey! Wake up! Wayne, do you think . . ."

Now, I don't mean a 700 foot angel said this. This was the impression on my heart. "Like, Wayne, do you think maybe that Me and you might have a few things to work out together? I know you've been to the seminar. I know that you're doing well. But do you think we might have a few things to talk about?"

This is when I began to understand the principle. And you might write it down, some of you who are pseudo-spirituals. Everything that initiates with God that's good. Even your prayer. "Oh, no, Wayne, prayer initiates with me." Oh, yeah? You back up to the eleventh chapter of Romans and what does it say? All things are of Him, and through Him, and to Him. And I discovered something about prayer that I never really knew.

I got down on my knees and started to pray. I was already on my knees, but I started to pray. It was like the Lord says, "Have we got anything to talk about?" I started searching my mind, searching my mind. And I said, "Oh Lord, I am having a problem." Now, watch this. I look back on it now it's the dumbest thing I could have ever said. To me, very wise. I said, "Lord, I'm having a hard time getting up early in the morning to have my quiet time. Lord, will You help me with that?"

I really did. I really did. God knows that. I mean, I wasn't talking out loud. It was like the Lord said, "Is that right, Wayne? When was the last time you went to bed at one o'clock and got up at two o'clock so excited you weren't even tired, just to be in My presence and to be in My Word?"

First time in my life I ever understood an idol, right then. I used to think they were golden statues out in the middle of the desert someplace. Ain't no dummy would bow down to that. It's whatever takes the place of the Lord deserves in covenant, is an idol. He deserves to be number one. Is that not correct? But haven't we studied that enough so far to understand that?

And I began to say, "Oh Lord, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." What does worldly sorrow do? It produces what? Death. And godly sorrow produces what? Repentance. That's what it tells us in the book of Corinthians. And so my sorrow evidently wasn't godly sorrow because I wasn't getting through. It's almost like the Lord slammed the doors of heaven and said, "You're lying through your teeth! You don't any more mean that then the man in the moon. You're just sorry you got caught," is basically what I was getting in my mind.

I say, "Well, Lord, what do You want me to do to prove it to You? You want me to give my stuff away?" Ooh, why'd I say that? And it was like the Lord right there said, "Yeah, not bad, not bad. I mean, I've been convenience to you all along, Wayne. You've been trying to add Me with everything else you've been in your life. Yeah, get rid of it."

And I'm going to ask you a question. Do you think God can put something better in the place that you thought that you couldn't really deal with and give away?

Well, man, I say, "Well, Lord, who do I give it to?" Don't ever ask Him if you don't really want to know. Clear as a bell the name came into my mind. The guy I was fishing with, the guy's a college student at that time.

"Well, he's got a boat. I don't have a boat. He's got four tackle boxes, twenty-five rods. I tell you what, I'll take it home and put it in my closet." "Yeah, I know that Wayne. I've heard that story. Yeah, that's for three months. And then the emotion wears off and you go do it again." "Well, Lord, I'll sell it. I need the money." "Give it away."

I didn't know the fellow I was going to give it to was going to become a mission candidate. Matter of fact, right now is waiting on his appointment to Zimbabwe, today as a result. And I think God was doing something here. He was saying, "I don't want this fishing to become to him what it's become to you. That's why I want you to give it to him. I don't want him to ever forget this."

Well, boy, I got real rebellious at that point. God does not have the right to tell me to give up my fishing gear. This is too radical. People come to church all the time do everything they want to do. Why do I have to fool with my fishing gear?

So I got up in front of the group and I said, "This is too emotional." And I said, "Why don't ya'll just go out and just find yourself to a place to pray, be alone with God." Sounded good to me. I was buying time. I felt like by the time they got back the emotion

would leave me and I could get more with integrity, could face my Christian life.

They all walked out of the room. Now, you, what would you have done? I'm looking, I'm sitting there wondering what I'm going to do. Here comes the fellow that God told me to give the fishing gear to. He walks in the backdoor and walks straight to me. Not a soul in the room with me.

"Robert, can I help you, son?"

It's a wonder God didn't go [motions of slapping back and forth]. Robert said, "Well, Wayne, I went out and sat under a tree and I was just starting to pray and God just impressed on me to come in here and talk to you."

"Well, yes, yes, Robert, uh, can I help you?"

"Well, I feel sort of stupid because I don't really have anything to say! Can you help me?" Good grief! What's He have to do, draw us pictures?

And I said, "Robert, now just shut up." And I gave him [I don't know all this fishing gear stuff!] my tackle box with six shelves on both sides, three drawers on each little bucket, reels, line, gave him a two-lube speed stick, lamb-basted 5500c, power handles. This is getting serious, isn't it? And he looked at me like my elevator hadn't touched the top floor and "What's wrong with you?" And I said, "Just leave me alone!"

I know that some of ya'll just so spiritual we can't just touch you. I want to tell you, I'll be honest with you, I want to be just real honest with you. I go to the cross just kicking and screaming. I do, I really do. But brother, when I get there and discover what covenant is all about that's when I begin to discover who I am. Because understanding and admitting whose I am is not the most fun of anything I've ever done. I see these people getting up and saying, "Lord, if it be sickness instead of health, Lord, if it be poverty instead of wealth," I think, "Do you know what you're saying?" Good grief!

Well, anyway, I gave him all my stuff. That's when I began to discover, by the way, what persecution's all about. It doesn't come from the people of the world, folks, you start coming to the cross and walking in covenant with a holy God, it's going to come from people sitting right around you tonight that think you're a little off the wall because you're radical in your beliefs.

The world been waiting on someone real for so long it'd knock them over. But, boy, I tell you what, the staff called me into their room. Oh, boy, here it goes! One of them said, "Well, Wayne, you have fever and chills? I mean, have you been feeling bad

lately?" And then one of 'em said, "Do you think I ought to give up my gold clubs?" I thought, "It wouldn't hurt you." I didn't say it.

But I went home and my wife watched me for three weeks like I had a viral disease. I mean, this was different. This was different. Mornings I was getting up and getting on my face before the Lord, she's not seen this before. And for three weeks this goes on.

It's funny, but she'd always fussed about me going fishing, then she started fussing about me giving my stuff away. And I thought, "Will you make up your mind?" But, you know, one day she called me at the church and she said, "Wayne, will you please come home." And she was crying. I thought the kids, something's wrong with the kids. And I went home.

And when I got home, she said, "Wayne, I need to ask you to forgive me." I said, "For what?" She said, "I've been bitter toward you for four and a half years of our marriage." Me? The ideal husband? I said, "What do you mean? What'd I do?"

She said, "Four and a half years ago when Stephanie was born," that was our first born, our little girl. She said, "Wayne, I needed you. But you stuck me with your mother and went deer hunting in West Texas and you've used your fishing and your deer hunting and all your little silly sports to escape your role of being father and husband of this family for all these years. And I've been so bitter. Wayne, I see such a difference in your life that I can't live with this bitterness anymore."

And she got all that poison out of her. I lost my fishing stuff, but I got a relationship with my wife and to this day you cannot break it open. Because He solidified us as the true covenant partners because I was back in covenant with the one I was supposed to be in covenant with. Letting Him call the shots in my life.

Now, don't get ahead of me. About three years later, Steven, my son, got old enough to hold a fishing rod in his hand. A friend of ours had one. He said, "Daddy, when we going fishing?" Don't do this! Lord, I don't know what I'm going to do!

And the Lord said, "Well, you just trust Me."

One night the phone rang; a guy called me up. He said, "Listen, you don't know me. I've heard your tape. I've heard your testimony." He said, "Will you come over to my house?" I said, "Yeah, I guess so." He said, "I just want to share something with you." I thought he was going to share something of a testimony or something like that.

I went over to his house, walked in. He took me to his garage. Oooooo! It looked like a sporting goods store. Rods all the way around the wall. And I thought, "Oh, the plot is thickening." He said, "Man, I've been praying." He said, "I just want you to know that God's put it on my heart, you pick out anything . . ."

Listen, there were the lube speed stick but they were hand tied. They weren't no cheapo guides that I had. And he gave me a 5000c and he gave me a whole sack of lures, and if I could have gotten a hold of God right there I'd a kissed Him right on the lips! And I begin to understand! I begin to understand!

Listen, listen, the One that I thought was being so hard on me was simply putting pressure to bring me back up under what covenant should have told me a long time ago.

Friend, you can talk about who you are all you want, but when you start talking about whose you are, your life's going to change. Some things have got to go. Some habits have got to go. Because God says, "You do it My way, or it doesn't work." And He also says in Psalms, "I will withhold nothing that is good from them that are righteous." You know, I've noticed something, He'll take us from an imbalance, to people who don't understand covenant and could care less, and He'll take us over here to another imbalance, to where we gotta get rid of the thing, and then He'll bring us back into a balance when He knows He can trust us.

I've got one more story to tell you. And then I'm going to close. I thought then, well, maybe I finally got my act straight. Everything's going on, it's been five or six years since that had taken place. Then one night I was in a conference at this place and God began to work on me. Again I thought, "Oh, no!" I've been broken once, I thought now I'm spiritual." I'm thick, folks, I'm thick.

It's a broken and contrite spirit the Lord wants, not one act of brokenness in your life. And that's what Romans is talking about. "Present, but then keep on presenting."

And so the Lord began to impress on me to get rid of our television set. It's in December. I said, "Devil, get away from me!" You've been there, haven't you?! You thought it was the devil. Oh no! God doesn't stutter when He speaks!

Well, I said, "Lord, I can't do that. Man, listen, this is the Christmas season. I don't want my kids to grow up warped because all the commercial . . . all the little kiddy shows are on and all the Snoopy things, the Christmas specials and this kind of stuff." You won't believe the kind of argument I put up. It's like

the Lord said, "Wayne, you're lying through your teeth. University of Kentucky plays their home games and they replay it every night at eleven o'clock and that's what's bothering you. And you personally don't know what you're going to on New Year's day without sitting on front of that idiot box for twelve hours watching teams you couldn't even care about."

I said, "Well, Lord, hold it. I don't know if that's You or not. I've got to put out a fleece." Ever put out a fleece? You usually get fleeced when you do this!

Well, Monday night, you've got to picture this. It's snowing, oh, it's beautiful in Kentucky. It had about eighteen inches of snow. Ice on the roads, no cars, no traffic, way out in the country and we had brand new carpet just put on our house. We had nine hundred square feet in our whole house. I love it! Because I could reach my kids from the center of that house wherever they were. Real small, real cozy. We had a big fireplace. I used to worry about that fire because we'd get that thing hot and you could feel the heat on the other side of the kitchen. And we had a color television set. And it was right back when "Little House on the Prairie" was beginning to start. Now, what a perfect time to put out a fleece.

I got them in there, the fire blazing, it's warm and cozy. Got popcorn. Dinah's fixing hot chocolate. I said, "Steven and Stephanie come here." They came and I said, "Listen, do you want to watch "Little House on the Prairie"? Dinah's in the kitchen. And I said, "Or would you all like to play some games, talk about Jesus?"

Steven, Steven got up and walked straight over to the television set, "I want to play games and talk about Jesus!" Popped that thing off. Oh no! Come on Lord! What are You doing to me?! I thought I had this thing figured out!

I found out that, you know, the average father spends thirty seconds of undivided attention per child per day every week. That's it. And see, what we're doing is we're sticking a television set in front of them and they really want us. But we're too selfish to do it. Well, I had to put up or shut up.

So we had to buy these games. Did you ever play "Hungry, Hungry Hippo"? Got a big ol' hippopotamus mouth thing and you pump the thing and it grabs marbles and it flies marbles all over the place. And it's alive and Steven would just bang that thing and everyone would stop, oh, marbles would just pewng, pewng, pewng.

And we bought that thing of a chicken laying eggs. Oh, something like that. You turn it on and it goes ruck, ruck, ruck. And you've got to push the button

at the right time and it drops an egg in the little thing and everyone tries to get the most eggs. We played that.

And one night I remember, we were having the most fun. And my wife, and she's very polite and mannerly, she's like pippin' you know? And one night, she got so tickled that she just laid over on the floor and tears, I mean, she said, "I've never had so much fun in all my life!"

And the Lord said, [bending over] "Told ya."

Proverbs 5:22 says, "A man is bound by the chords of his own sin, his own unwillingness to walk in the agreement of the terms of covenant."

Friend, we entered in. Now what in the world are we doing doing our own thing? Do we have a right to do that? No way. It's only by God's grace He hasn't taken us yet.

And listen, don't get ahead of me again. I'm not saying go home and get rid . . . we got rid of our television set. In January my little son came in one day, this little skinny rascal, and Steven put his arms around me and said, "Daddy, thank you." I said, "For what?" He said, "For getting rid of the television."

For about a year and a half we didn't have one. God brought one or we got one. I'm not saying, "Go home and beat your television set to death." What I'm saying is, that we're to be in covenant with the living God. And God has His own way of bringing us along line of what He wants in our life. We have no right to tell Him, "No." Not one. You have no right, I have no right. We're bondslaves in covenant with the living God. He tells us what to do. We just say, "Yes." That's it. Period. No questions, no ifs, no ands, no buts. He tells us. And then we begin to discover what that joy is all about.

And folks, I got to read this verse; I'm about through. We need to pay attention to it, if we're not then some things are going to happen. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 11. You don't think this is not serious? You know, the covenant meal we have in the church is really our reminder of this fact. That's why it's called that. And in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 26. Notice what Paul said. He says:

1 Cor 11:26-30 [reads]

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, [and boy, this will really mean something to you later on] you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup [remember the eating and the drinking back what we read in the Old Testament? That's what

I'm saying!] of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.
 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. [is it presented as a living sacrifice?]
 30 For this reason many among you are [what?] weak and [what?] sick, and a number sleep. NASB

He's not talking about sleeping in the service now, what's he talking about here? You're dead. "Death?! You mean God took somebody's physical life because he wouldn't walk in accordance to covenant?" That's what it said. "Did He have a right to do that?" You better believe He did. Because that's what you understood, or should have, when you entered into covenant. If you didn't maybe you do now. He has that right [snaps fingers] to snuff out a person's physical life, just like that. He gave it, He can take it away. We're in covenant. But if we judged ourselves rightly we should not be judged.

Well, I think it's pretty clear that there's a lot of people in America today that live to talk about who they are. Well, they can stand; I'm a hand raiser. I love hand raisers. But there are some people who do it makes me want to run. Because I can tell just by the way they're doing it, they're trying to cover up what they're not willing to be in the crucial moments of their life during the week. And folks, if you're interested in who you are, help yourself. But you'd better understand whose you are. Because He has every right because of covenant, to dictate to us a lifestyle. It might even end up being your fishing. Since He's given mine back to me now, if you want to give it away I'll just meet you after the thing . . . no, you just never know whatever it is.

You say, "Wayne, I don't bass fish; you missed me a mile tonight." Big deal. What's your bass fishing? What is it that you do that you told God silently that You'd better not touch this area in my life? That's it.

Now, how do you know if God's spoken to you? Now, do you know how you know? If you're irritated right now, God's got you. I didn't say anything. I just told you what happened to me and I read the Scripture to you. But, if there's something bugging you right now on the inside, look out, look out. I'll just give you a word of advice, between now and next week, go home and deal with it. Because the pressure gets ahead of you.

Let's pray.

Father, we just thank You so much for teaching us. And until we come to the cross, we'll never know the joy. Lord, our minds seem to work backwards. Lord, we want all the joy but we don't want the cross.

And I pray Father, that You'll teach us that the rules of covenant are very clear. Lord, thank You that You have the right to control our lives before the Lord; we're certainly not worthy to control our own. We're making a mess out of them now. But Father, help us just to simply say, "Yes."

And then Lord, we thank You for all the things that You've promised and You're faithful to do as You've promised that You'll do in our life.

We love You. We praise You. Father, help us to stop trying so hard and just die. We love You.

In Jesus' name, amen.