



## In Order to Live You Have to Die

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open to John 12. Today is International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and we've been planning on praying for our persecuted brothers and sisters. When I flew back from the Korean peninsula last week—North Korea being the place in the world where Christian persecution is most severe—I knew I wanted to do more on this Sunday. I shared last week that God did some things in my own heart personally—and pastorally, as I think about us as a church—that I knew I wanted to share with us. So I want us to pause in our study in 1 John and go to this text in the Gospel of John.

But before we dive in, I want to make sure we keep up with our memorization schedule. We don't want to skip over that. We are in week eight of our attempt to memorize 1 John. We are almost there—eight verses out of ten. You don't have 1 John open in your Bibles right now, so John himself is not going to help you out. You can't even glance down at it. So let's see how far you can go. Go as far as you can in 1 John 1:1-8:

*<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—<sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—<sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.<sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Well done! Keep it up. We're 80% of the way there in 1 John 1.

Now let's look at the Gospel of John, chapter 12, and the Korean peninsula. Just to give you a heads up, I really want to share with you a good bit about the story of the church in Korea, which means our time for the next few minutes is going to be a little more story than usual, with a little less in-depth study in this text. However, I hope to do this in a way that brings this text to life.

Let me start by giving you a little history of the church in Korea, with an emphasis particularly on the last century. Christian teaching there goes all the way back to at least the 1600s and the Catholic

church, but Protestant gospel teaching was pretty scarce until the latter 19th century. Robert Thomas was a missionary to China, but God gave him a heart for Korea. Foreigners were not welcome there at that point. On his second attempt to get there by boat, he took with him a case of Bibles. His boat was attacked when they got to shore, so he just started throwing Bibles overboard, yelling, “Jesus! Jesus!” until they seized him and killed him. Many Koreans remember Robert Thomas.

In 1884, the few Christians in Korea received official permission from the government to spread their religion, which opened the doors for missionaries to come in to help support them. By 1900, less than 1% of the Korean population was Christian. That started to change, though, with what became known in Korean history as the Pyongyang Revival of 1907—what many have called the “Korean Pentecost.”

In January 1907 there was a large Bible conference held with 1,500 Christian leaders—which was a large number considering the actual number of Christians in the country. It included both Korean leaders and missionaries from other countries who came together in Pyongyang, which is now the capital of North Korea. In anticipation of that meeting, people were pleading before God. Their country was struggling. The church was struggling. They were desperate, which is part of why they called this conference.

One night during this meeting, the preachers—both missionaries and Korean pastors—while they were preaching became overwhelmed by their own sin and their own need for repentance. They started confessing their sin publicly as they were preaching. These were sins they had hidden from God and sinful attitudes they had harbored toward others in the church. Their confession led others to begin doing the same. People started standing up spontaneously and often simultaneously in the gathering to confess their sin out loud, crying out for God’s mercy. Here’s how one pastor described that first night:

The sound of many praying at once brought not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse of prayer. The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God’s throne. Just as on the day of Pentecost, God came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, the spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the whole audience.

Over on one side, somebody began to weep, then in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and cry, then throw himself to the floor, beating the floor with his fist in perfect agony of conviction. One man tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it and cried to me across the room, “Pastor, tell me—is there any hope for me? Can I be forgiven?” Then he threw himself to the floor and wept and almost screamed in agony.

Sometimes after a confession the whole audience would break out in audible prayer. The effect of that audience—of hundreds of people praying together in audible prayer—was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping. We would all weep. We couldn’t help it. So the meeting went on like this until 2:00 in the morning with confession and weeping and praying.

What happened that night continued for the next two days and these marks of Korean revival were born: studying God's Word, honest confession of sin and collective audible prayer, crying out for God's mercy. In the following days, that movement of the Spirit spread into village after village and church after church. People started coming to Christ left and right. Churches were being planted. Christians were praying, gathering early every morning to pray plus for all night prayer meetings. Northern Korea specifically was becoming a stronghold of Protestant Christianity in Asia.

So Pyongyang, the current capital of North Korea, became known as the "Jerusalem of the East." It was affecting the entire culture. Christians were starting hospitals and schools. Union Christian College in Pyongyang was the first four-year college in Korea. In the middle of it all though, the country was experiencing all sorts of turmoil and trial, first from Japanese occupation, then from war that led to the division of the country and the implementation of Communism in the North. I'll tell you a little more later about the effect of the Japanese occupation and Communism on the church, but many Christians fled to the south.

In 1900, Korea was less than 1% Christian. Christianity was practically non-existent. One century later, in South Korea, there are over ten million followers of Jesus. From less than 1% to ten million! The church I was preaching in last week has over 60,000 members. It's a large church and is just one of many churches like that. On top of that, South Korea is second only to the United States in the number of missionaries being sent out around the world, which is pretty startling when you realize its population is equivalent to the combined population of Florida and California.

In one century, South Korea went from having hardly any Christians to being a global center of Christianity. How does that happen? John 12:24: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* According to Jesus, what is the key to a seed-bearing fruit? It has to die. Hold a grain of wheat in your hand. If you keep it there, it won't do anything. If you plant it in the ground, it dies, then bears all kinds of life you could never have imagined before.

Jesus is saying that in order to live, you have to die. Death is necessary for life. That's the clear meaning of John 12:24. The context here is that Jesus is about to go to the cross. He is literally about to physically die. He's talking about the life He will bring to others through His death. This is the gospel at the center of our faith and our lives.

If you're visiting with us with a friend or family member, or maybe you're just exploring Christianity, this is the core message of the Bible: Jesus died so we might live. We have all sinned against God, we deserve separation from God and we deserve death for all eternity. But God has not left us alone as payment for our sin. Instead, He has come to us in the Person of Jesus Who lived the life we could not live—a life of perfect obedience to God. He had no sin. Then, even though He had no sin and therefore

did not have to die, He chose to die for you and me. He chose to die on behalf of sinners. He took our place. He became our Substitute. He died so that any one of us, by turning from our sin and trusting in His death on the cross for us, can be forgiven of all our sin and restored to eternal life with God. His death brings us life. So we invite you today to receive eternal life by trusting in the death of Jesus for you. Jesus died so you might live.

Death is necessary for life. In order for you to live, He died. Jesus is clearly talking about that in this passage. He's not just talking about what He's going to do; He's also talking about what we do. Listen to what He says next in verse 25: "*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*" Jesus is not just talking about His death—He's talking about our lives. Right now in this gathering, through His Word, Jesus is saying, "If you want to live, you have to die."

That's what Jesus means when He talks about hating your life in this world. Notice He says, "*in this world,*" which we'll talk about more in a minute. Jesus is not saying to hate life ultimately. He's saying to hate life that is caught up in this world of rebellion against God and His ways. Do not love life like that. Hate life like that. Die to life like that. This is what Jesus says to every potential follower of His.

Think of Luke 9:23-24: "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.*" A cross is an instrument of death. This is not advanced Christianity, only for mature Christians. This is basic Christianity. In order to become a Christian, you must to sin and yourself. Galatians 2:20 is the testimony of every Christian: "*I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*"

We talked about this last week. Jesus is my life. To live, you die. To live in the next world, you die to this world. To bear fruit that lasts, you lay down your life. So to every one of us in this gathering: if you want to live, you have to die.

The reason I go to this text is because I believe this is what has happened in Korea. When I read about revival in Korea and heard stories there last week, it wasn't as though they discovered something new in the Bible. No, they realized in a fresh way this basic truth in Christianity: in order to live, you must die. Death precedes life. I see at least three ways this takes place, both in Scripture and in the story of the church in Korean history. They're pretty simple.

### **In order to live, you have to die to sin.**

If you want life, Jesus is saying you have to die to sin. This doesn't mean you don't ever sin. We've talked about this throughout 1 John. As long as we are in this world, we are prone to sin. But

that's just it. We hate that. We hate that we are prone to sin. We don't want to sin. When we do sin, we confess it before God and others. We repent. We turn from sin. We don't toy with it. We don't treat sin as trivial.

That's what happened in 1907 in Pyongyang. God, by His grace, opened the eyes of the leaders in the church to see their sin and they hated it. They started confessing it, leading others to spontaneously do the same. They cried out for forgiveness, with tears and weeping, falling on the floor. Why? They were broken over their sin, wondering, "Can I even be forgiven for this?" We think that sounds extreme. Obviously we know forgiveness is possible in Christ, but when was the last time we came to that point in our sin?

I can't help but think when I hear this story that we are missing it today. I look at the church in our country today and I don't see hatred for sin, not just the church generally, but us as a church—and even more specifically, my own heart. We need that kind of hatred for sin. Do we hate sin so much that when we gather together in our worship, we are weeping over our sin? When was the last time that happened in a corporate setting like this? When has that ever happened for many of us?

I'm guessing many of us have been Christians for decades and we've never been in a church setting where people are weeping over sin, crying out in honest confession and brokenness over sin. Do we realize the kind of church culture we've created, where we as pastors, members, attenders alike, expect to go to church week after week after week, watch what happens on the stage, then move on with our lives as normal? I just wonder what would happen if we stopped at some point and said, "What are we doing?"

What if all across this room we started crying out in confession of sin we've been hiding before God, sin we even harbor toward others in the church? What would happen in this gathering, right now, if we started confessing sin like they did in Pyongyang, hating our sin, bringing it out to the open, falling on our faces before the holiness of God, weeping over sin? Why is that so foreign to us? I hesitate to even ask that question in one sense, because I know this is something we can't manufacture; this is something only the Spirit of God can make happen in our hearts.

### **In order to live, you have to die to self.**

This leads to the second death I see in the story of Christianity and all over Scripture. In order to live, you have to die to sin. Then in order to live, you have to die to self. Remember, why did this revival break out in Korea? Because they were desperate for God. They saw their country struggling. They saw their churches struggling. They said, "We need to get together. We need to cry out for God's help." They were praying and pleading before God, and God answered. This has been the story of the church in South Korea. It has been a story of prayerful desperation for God.

Every morning last week and this week and next week, the South Korean gathers together at 5:30 to pray. Multitudes of them come together every morning to pray. They have all-night prayer meetings. I'm guessing most Christians in this gathering right now have never been to an all-night prayer meeting. Some of them do that every Friday night.

I remember a professor of mine in seminary telling a story about preaching one time in South Korea. He was staying in his hotel and woke up really early one morning to a sound outside. It was still dark, so he got up and went over to the window. He opened it and saw a stadium full of people. A loud roar was coming from that stadium and he thought, "What kind of sport do they play at four in the morning in Korea?" Frustrated, he closed the window and tried to go back sleep, but he couldn't.

Later that morning, he went down to the lobby and asked the receptionist, "What sport do you play at four in the morning? What was going on in the stadium?" The receptionist said, "Oh, sir, that was not a sporting event. That was the church praying to God." It was the roar of Christians crying out to God from a stadium at four in the morning. We gather in stadiums here, but for much different purposes. Our roars, our crying out, is not for God. I hear this and think, "God, I want to pray like this. Teach me to pray.."

After I preached last week in Korea—where God really moved powerfully—after every message, one of the pastors would come up to lead in a time of prayer. He would call everyone to begin praying. The word for "Lord" is *gwijog*. All of a sudden they would cry out together in one voice, "*Gwijog!*" They would audibly cry out in prayer. Then they would come back at different points and say it together. "*Gwijog! Gwijog! Gwijog!*" "Lord! Lord! Lord!" They would cry out, praising God, confessing sin, pleading for His grace.

Brothers and sisters, we need to learn to really pray, to cry out to God. We're going to have some all-night prayers meetings here. I don't know what this needs to look like, but we spend hours doing so much stuff in the church and in our lives, but just minutes, relatively, in prayer. Something's got to change.

What is prayer? Prayer is an expression of death to self. Prayer is saying, "We can't do it. We need You, God." Whenever we don't pray, we're saying, "God, we can do this without You." But we can't. We need to see that we need God in our lives. We need God in our marriages. We need God in our families, in our kids' lives, in our teenagers' lives. We need God in light of all the temptations and trials we're walking through. I see the prayer requests you send in every week spelling out the things you're walking through. We need God in our church. We need God in our country. We have reasons to pray.

We need to stop living our lives—in our families and as a church—like we can do this without Him. We cannot do this without Him. We need God. If we believe this, we will pray like we need Him. We'll cry out to God with passion, because we can't do this on our own. "God, help us to die to

ourselves. God, deliver us from our sinful self-sufficiency.” We have to die to ourselves if we want to live. If we want our marriages, families, kids and churches to be what God designed them to be—if we want to see His grace in our culture—we’ve got to pray.

### **In order to live, you have to die to the ways of this world.**

It couldn’t be any clearer in this passage that in order to live, we have to die to the ways of this world. “Hate your life in this world,” Jesus says. Again, this means to hate the kind of life that is caught up in the ways of this world—the pursuits, the pleasures, the possessions and the priorities of this world. In order to really live, you have to die to these things.

I literally saw this kind of death in South Korea. The day before I left, I was standing in a cemetery the Korean church has preserved as a monument to missionaries who came to them, many of them from the United States. These men and women died to the pursuits, pleasures, possessions and priorities of this world. They did what looked like foolishness to the world, moving to an unknown country to learn an unknown language and live in a difficult place where they had to die daily to the ways of this world.

That cemetery is full of missionaries and their families, including little children—some a year old, some a month old—who died because of dysentery or typhoid or other illnesses. There were husbands who died and their wives carried on the work, or vice versa. One of the tombstones was Homer Hulbert. He was a diplomat from England who had been pretty successful in the world, but he had a heart for Korea. He ended up giving his life to the Korean people. There’s a quote on his tombstone that says, “I would rather be buried in Korea than in Westminster Abbey.” That’s a perspective on the ways of the world.

The cemetery is filled with students who came during the student volunteer movement in the early 1900s. They went out on a mission and spent 40 years of their lives, eventually dying there. But it wasn’t just students. Mary Scranton was 52 when she decided to go to Korea, where she started a school for girls. She spent her last 24 years working to spread the gospel in Korea until she died at age 76.

It wasn’t just missionaries, but also those who supported them. There’s one area of the cemetery where four generations of the Underwood family are represented—four generations serving for the spread of the gospel in Korea. Do you know how their lives and work there were financed? John Underwood produced the first successful modern typewriter just before the turn of the century. By 1939, he had produced five million of them. So he was making all this money and do you know what it went toward? He used that revenue to support his family’s spread of the gospel in Korea.

That’s a different way to live. The world would say, “Why are you giving your money toward that?” The world would say to these missionaries, “Why are going there? Why are you giving up

everything to go to Korea? Why are you going where you're likely to die of diseases? Do you hate your life?" They'd say, "Yes—in this world. But in reality, we are finding life and we're giving life. We're yielding fruit that's going to bear eternal life beyond what anybody can imagine."

I mentioned the hospitals and schools that were built by Christians during these days, some of which still survive today. They were planting churches, loving people, affecting society with the love and grace of God. At one point the Korean population was 50% in poverty. As a result of what's happened over the last century, poverty has gone down to 1-2% in South Korea. What a picture! Churches are being planted and the country is being changed.

It wasn't just missionaries from the West who were dying to the ways of this world. It was our brothers and sisters in the East. I mentioned earlier the Japanese occupation of Korea in the early 20th century and then Communism in the north after that—both of which wreaked havoc on the church. One of the main issues in the Japanese occupation was shrine worship. Japan had set up shrines that they required Korean citizens to bow down before. Some Christians and pastors justified bowing down to them as being an act of patriotism. But others said, "No, that's idolatry. We'll risk our lives before we'll bow down to these shrines." As a result, kids were kicked out of schools, parents lost jobs, losing their income to support their families. Many were thrown into prison—nurses, farmers, pregnant mothers, teenage students. One young pastor of a large church, Choo Ki-Chul, was arrested in 1938 and imprisoned for six months, questioned, released and threatened: "Don't keep preaching what you've been preaching." When he was released, the next Sunday he stepped into the pulpit in his church. He told his people, "If you bow down at the feet of shrines, that's idolatry."

An undercover detective was in the congregation. Choo was arrested again, with his young children crying as they took him away. His congregation met every morning at 5:00 a.m., even in the bitter cold, to pray that God would help their pastor to stand under persecution. In the days that followed he was flogged and tortured many times as his captors tried to persuade him to bow to idols. He never gave in. He withered in prison for the next six years until his body wasted away. He said to his wife, "I've gone the road I was supposed to go. Follow my steps and we'll meet in heaven."

One of his two sons went on to follow in his dad's footsteps as an evangelist across North Korea before he was martyred as well. I was struck when I read this from one writer who said, "I never met that son, but the crop of keen young men, able in God's Word, now serving in churches throughout South Korea, who came from that son's church at the time of his ministry, is exceptional." *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

Kim Yoon-Sup was arrested a total of ten different times. Every time they tortured him. They stretched his back out on a bench with his hands tied underneath, his head hanging over the edge, then



they poured water from a kettle down his nostrils to simulate drowning, sometime adding red pepper to increase the pain. They branded him with a hot iron. They used the back of a chair as a fulcrum to try to bend his body backward to simulate bowing down to a shrine. But he'd fight, kicking and screaming, to keep from bowing down at any point.

When they realized they couldn't beat him into submission, they released him for a short time, let him taste the freedom of life with his family and church. When he would refuse to bow, they would arrest him again, yank him away from his four-year-old son, crying uncontrollably. Before his tenth arrest and eventual death in prison, Kim was asked, "How do you have the courage to keep going in the face of constant arrest?" His reply? "When I became a Christian, I died with Christ. And once you are dead, what men do to you cannot hurt you."

With the end of Japanese occupation came the onslaught of Communism, which unfortunately was far more brutal than anything the Japanese had done. Mass tortures. Executions. At one point the People's Police ordered about 180 church members to come to their church building for a meeting. When they got there, they were locked inside, the wooden church building was set on fire with officers standing outside to shoot anybody who tried to escape. The Christians knew they were going to die no matter what they did, so they started singing in worship until the burning building collapsed over them and they were consumed in the fire.

One more story that sums up both periods of persecution. Son Yang-Won was a pastor in a leper colony. He refused to worship at the shrines, so he was arrested and imprisoned for years, until he was released when the Japanese occupation ended. Then during Communist rule, his two oldest sons, Tongin and Tongsin, were off at middle school, doing well, with hopes of going to a university in America. One day in a Communist revolt, a mob of students representing the Communist party came to the campus, knew these boys were strong Christians, so they brought them out and started to beat them. Eventually a student named Ahn, the leader of that student mob, shot and killed both of the boys.

The news came back to Pastor Son that his two oldest sons had been killed. By that time, the revolt had been quieted and the killer had been apprehended. Pastor Son immediately sent a messenger to the court to plead for them to spare that student, offering to adopt him as his own son. The judge, totally shocked, agreed, and Pastor Son adopted his sons' killer days after he killed them. Years later, when the Communists invaded the leper colony that he had gone back to pastor, everybody said, "Get out." He refused to flee. He stayed with his church. He was arrested and imprisoned, tied up with 75 others, and executed, where his adopted son Ahn wept over his body.

None of these stories make sense if John 12 is not true. If life is all about the possessions, pleasure and pursuits in this world, then these brothers and sisters totally wasted their lives. They should have lived it up in this world. But they didn't waste a thing. They spent their lives for what matters. I

think we're the ones who are tempted to waste our lives. I guarantee you not one of those brothers and sisters regrets hating their lives in this world for a second.

What did Jesus say in verse 26? *"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."* Can I tell you where all these brothers and sisters are right now? They're where Jesus is and the Father is honoring them. They don't regret for a second hating their lives in this world. They know life—real life!

I walked around that Korean cemetery and said to one of the brothers with me, "I can't wait to meet these guys. They died to the ways of this world and others are following in their footsteps today." On Thursday last week, I stood at the border of North Korea, looking over into that country, realizing we have brothers and sisters on the other side of those mountains right now, many languishing in labor camps. They didn't have much to begin with, but what they had they were willing to let go of because they are followers of Christ—and they're dying as a result.

It's happening right now, while we're sitting here. We have brothers and sisters in North Korea who have died to the ways of this world—and brothers and sisters in South Korea who are dying to the ways of this world to make the gospel known there and to the ends of the earth. As I mentioned, South Korea has become the second largest missionary sending country, behind the United States, even though they're much smaller than we are.

In 1993, Pastor Ha—the founding pastor of the church where I was preaching last week———challenged the church send out 2,000 missionaries when the church had 3,000 members. That challenge was 25 years ago. This last year, they did it. Over the past 25 years, they have sent out 2,000 missionaries—people moving across cultures for the spread of the gospel. They have close to 1,000 on the field right now from their church.

Think about it. That would be like me saying to McLean Bible Church today, "Here's the challenge. We're going to send out 7,000 missionaries." In order to do that, we would need tens of thousands supporting 7,000 going. This is all of us playing a part. How is that possible? How is fruit like that possible? Everybody dies. Everybody dies to sin, everybody dies to self, a church dies to the ways of this world and lives for what's going to matter far beyond this world.

I want to challenge us today as a church family, based on the history of our brothers and sisters in South Korea—and more importantly, based on basic Christianity and the words of Jesus our Savior—let's die. Let's die to our sin. Let's hate our sin in this world. Let's ask God to break us over sin in this world, to weep over it.

In the lobby earlier, I was talking with a brother who just came here this morning, and as we were walking through this Word, he was broken over sin. I won't go into all the details, but I knew there was conflict in his marriage. He said, "I am totally messed up and I've not been seeing straight. God

opened my eyes today to the sin in my own heart. I need to change. I need to repent. I need to reconcile. I need to do whatever it takes to get my marriage back together.”

God, help us see our sin like You see our sin. Help us not just to go on week after week, just kind of going on with life as normal. Help us to hate sin, to weep over sin, to die to ourselves, to pray like we need You, to pray like we want You, to cry out like we believe You are able to answer our prayers.

Think about what God is able to do. If it dies, it bears much fruit. Think about the fruit. From less than 1% Christian in Korea to ten million followers of Christ today! Our God is able to do that!

I talk with so many people who say, “Our country is so far gone, there’s no hope for us.” That is not true. Let’s be clear. Our hope is not in another election. Our hope is not in any leader. Our hope is in our God. He is able to move in mighty ways when we call on Him, when we ask Him, when we cry out to Him in faith. Do we believe that? What if God does a spiritual awakening here? We pray for that. And not just here. Think about some other country that’s less than 1% Christian today, such as Afghanistan. Is it possible that in a quarter of a century from now that ten million followers of Jesus would be in Afghanistan, sending out missionaries all over the world?

Do we believe that? Our God is able to do that, if we will pray, if we give our lives toward that end. What fruit does God want to bear in our lives and in our church if we will die? Whether it’s students or 60-year-olds who are taking the gospel around the world, or men and women right here getting up to work day in and day out, like John Underwood. I imagine there were some days when he wondered, “What difference is my life really making? I’m just doing business here.” But his resources were being used to spread the gospel and change a country.

What does God want to do in your life? *“Whoever loves his life loses it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”* That is sure truth. *“If anyone serves me,”* Jesus said, *“he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”* These are hard words, but they are glorious words. It’s hard to die to sin. It’s hard to die to self. It’s hard to die to the ways of this world. But it’s worth it, brothers and sisters. It’s worth it to gain eternal life and bear fruit, not just in our lives, but far beyond our lives in others experiencing eternal life and in it all, to receive the honor of God. What else is worth living for?

May this be not just the story of the church in South Korea—may it be our story. I’ve come back from my time on the Korean peninsula praying that this may be our story. I want to be a part of this story. I pray that God would give us grace to die, that we might live in this way.

Let’s pray.

O God, I don’t even presume to know all that I’ve just preached and what it means for my life, much less for others’ lives and for our church. But God, help us die in all these ways. Help us die to sin.

Help us die to ourselves and give us a holy sense of desperation for You. Give us a holy discontentment with playing games before You, coasting through casual, comfortable Christianity before You.

God, we pray for more. We want to experience life. We want to experience eternal life. We want others to experience eternal life. We want to see fruit for Your glory around the world. So help us, we pray, to die to the ways of this world. Help us see straight. Help us experience all that You have designed for us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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