



The Secret to Living the High Life

The Story of Scripture – Part 16

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to 1 Kings 2. It's good to be together around God's Word on this Memorial Day weekend. As a church, we honor those who have given their lives defending and promoting freedoms like we enjoy right now. We do not take this freedom to worship for granted. We also honor those across our church who are giving their lives and families on a day in and day out basis toward that end.

That leads in a sense to what I want us to think about today in God's Word. The title of our study is "The Secret to Living the High Life," which is a reference to a phrase we use to describe experiencing the best life possible—"the good life." That's what everybody wants, right? I want to show you in God's Word today that this desire to experience the good life is good. It's from God. The desire to experience life to the full is a God-given desire and a God-given promise.

Jesus said in John 10:10 (NIV), *"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."* While messages like we heard last week about sacrifice for the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth might make you think Christianity is only about sacrifice as an end in itself, that's not true. Jesus calls us to die to ourselves, but it's so that we might experience new life, abundant life, a full life, a happy life—"the high life," if you will. The question is: how do we experience that? This is where the Word of God gives us a much different answer than that of the world around us.

For the next few minutes, I want to plead with you to hear the Word of God and trust His Word more than you do this world when it comes to living the high life. The reason I use the phrase "the high life" is because this week in our Bible reading we just read the height of Old Testament history in 1 Kings 2-8, the beginning of Solomon's reign as king over God's people.

If you're visiting with us, we're getting close to the middle of a journey reading through the story of the Bible from cover to cover, a chapter or two a day. I realize not everybody has been reading along—and by the way, it's not too late to join in or jump back in if you've lost track—but along the way today I'll try to bring everybody up to speed. Everything we have read so far in the Old Testament is coming to a climax at this point.

In our Bible reading of the Story of the Scripture, it's been centuries now that God has promised to bless His people, form them into a nation and bring them into a Promised Land so they would become a blessing to the nations around them. As we read 1 Kings 2-8, God's people are now in a land, as a nation, bringing blessings to the nations. Let me show you this. Start with me in 1 Kings 2:1, as David—Israel's most famous king—passes on his throne to his son Solomon.

When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, ² "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, ³ and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ⁴ that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'"

The Height of Reverence for God's Word

In Old Testament history, Saul, who had been king, had not revered the Word of God. God said to Saul back in 2 Samuel, "Your kingdom shall not continue. You have not kept the commandments the Lord gave you, so the Lord has sought out a man after His own heart who will revere His Word." David did just that, as is evident in the Psalms we've read over the last couple weeks.

This is one of the things I love about reading through the Bible chronologically like we're doing, because at the same time we're reading 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, we're also reading different Psalms that were written during this height of Old Testament history. The book of Psalms starts with our memory verse from last week, Psalm 1:1-3:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

That sounds like the high life, right? In everything you do, you prosper. Sounds good, but how does that happen? This doesn't sound like God wants His people to be miserable. It happens through delighting in the law of the Lord. This is the prosperous, blessed and happy life. David wrote Psalm 19 that we looked at last week. God's Word revives the soul and rejoices the heart. It's better than gold or fine foods and it will last forever. This is the high life and it's found in reverence for God's Word. This is why in 1 Kings 2:2-3 a dying father says this to his son:

I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.

The Height of Dependence on God's Wisdom

The high life is found in reverence for God's Word, and secondly, it's found in dependence on God's wisdom. We read this in 1 Kings 3:5-14:

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

Sometimes our family plays a game when we're around the dinner table. We have an app we use and we ask each other thought-provoking questions. One of them recently was, "If you could wish for one thing, what would it be?" I'm not going to share with you all the answers that were represented around our table, but I don't think any of us asked for wisdom. Out of all the things in this world Solomon could have asked for when he was faced with this choice, the one thing he asked for was wisdom.

God was pleased with this and answered Solomon in a way that far exceeded what Solomon asked for. That leads to a story at the end of this chapter that illustrates Solomon's wisdom and closes with this conclusion in 1 Kings 3:28: *"All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice."* Then jump down to the end of the next chapter where there's a pretty incredible summary of the height of his dependence on God's wisdom—1 Kings 4:29-34:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop

that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

This is why, in our reading through the Story of Scripture, we are now in the book of Proverbs—this book of wisdom sayings which were mostly written by Solomon. In the Old Testament, this was the height of dependence on God’s wisdom.

The Height of Extravagance in God’s Worship

Go next to 1 Kings 6:1, where we read this: *“In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord.”* The verses that follow go on to describe the construction of the temple.

Let me set the context here if you’re totally new to the Bible—or maybe if you’ve been a Christian for a long time, but nobody’s ever walked you through the story of Scripture and it seems like a bunch of disjointed books, so you’re not sure how it all fits together.

In the very beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, God and humans are together in perfect harmony. But then sin in their hearts separates the man and woman from the presence of God. That leads to the second book of the Bible, the book of Exodus, where God sets up a way for His presence to dwell in a special way among His people who trust in Him. The Bible teaches that God is omnipresent—He’s everywhere—as we read in Psalm 139 last week.

In a special way, God set up a tabernacle—a meeting tent—as a symbol of His presence among His people while they traveled to the land He had promised them. God’s presence was over the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night throughout their journey. That’s how the book of Exodus ends.

Now they’re finally in the Promised Land and King David wants to build a more permanent structure for God’s presence and glory to dwell in. But God says to him, “Wait. Solomon will do that.” So now that’s what’s happening here. Over the course of seven years—a picture of perfection—Solomon constructs the temple. When we get to 1 Kings 8, a transition takes place, as the Ark of the Covenant—symbolizing the presence of God in the center of the tabernacle—is brought into the temple. Go with me to 1 Kings 8:4-11 and read what happens there:

And they brought up the ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place in the inner sanctuary

of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

This is the height of worship in Old Testament history, as the glory of God is now dwelling among His people in the temple. Extravagant is the right word for their worship here. As you read these chapters, you see the best builders are assembled, the best materials are used and they are all-out celebrating. All the people are present and they're offering more sacrifices than they can count.

Just imagine the scene. Put yourself in the shoes of an ordinary Israelite who, for all your life, has been bringing sacrifices to a tent with a few articles of gold and bronze. Now everything is magnified, as God is glorified in greater ways than you ever even thought possible. Look down in 1 Kings 8:22-24 as Solomon praises God for the culmination of all His promises:

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, and said, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day."

It's all coming to pass. Then jump down to the end of the chapter, as this all comes together: the reverence for God's Word, the dependence on God's wisdom and the extravagance in God's worship. Look at 1 Kings 8:54-61:

Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, "Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day."

Did you notice that phrase in verse 60? This wasn't just about the people of Israel—this was about all the peoples. It's exactly what we talked about last week. This is the story of Scripture. Mission is not just a side note; it's at the center. God always blesses His people for the spread of His glory among all peoples. Look back up at 1 Kings 8:41-43 to see what Solomon prayed there:

Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

The Nations Coming to See the Glory of God at the Temple

We see it over and over and over again that global mission is not just a program in the church—it's the purpose of God in the world. The nations are coming to see the glory of God at the temple. Why did God give His people His Word? Why did God give Solomon such wisdom? God did it for the spread of His worship in the world. This is what we see in 1 Kings 10:4-9. A pagan queen, the queen of Sheba, comes and sees the temple and hears Solomon's wisdom. Listen to her conclusion:

And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the Lord, there was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness."

Did you hear that? This is a pagan queen giving glory to God! Why? Because God's people are happy. Why are they happy? Because they revere the Word of God, they have the wisdom of God and they're giving worship to God. The queen of Sheba concludes, "This is the high life." God, help us see what a pagan queen saw—that this is the high life.

What in the world does this story from the Bible have to do with our lives today—with your life today? In our former pastor Lon's words, "So what?" This is where I want you to realize that this story is not just about God and some people a long time ago. What we just read is a story about God and you, and me, and us. The same God Whose Word is being revered here, Who's giving wisdom here, Who's being worshiped here, desires for you right where you are sitting to be happy, to be blessed, to be abundant.

So does that mean we need to get busy building a temple and offer tons of sacrifices as a nation with a wise king? No. Well, actually kind of yes, but in a much greater way than we might think and in a much greater way than these people in the Old Testament could have imagined. I want you to see the path to living the high life today in light of the heights we're seeing here.

Love the Word of God in Written Form

Do you want to live the high life today? I exhort you to not listen to this world. Listen to God's Word. That's the first thing. Love the Word of God. Love it because Psalm 1:1-2 is still true. Blessed is the man, blessed is the woman, happy, full, abundant is the life that delights in the law of the Lord. Psalm 19 is even more true now than it was then. In God's Word there is great reward. I can say even more true now, because we have more of God's Word now than they had in 1 Kings. We have the entire Bible, 66 inspired books that tell us, not just part of the story, but the whole story of how it all began and how it's all going to end. We have the Word of God sitting in front of us in written form—the Bible.

I was so struck reading through Psalm 119 at the end of last week in our Bible reading—176 verses of pure joy in God's Word. I've put in your notes all kinds of pictures of love for God's Word that we see in Psalm 119. As I was reading, I was praying for Heather and our kids, and I was praying for you. I was praying specifically that these things in Psalm 119 would be true in your lives. I'm just going to list some different verses here for you to go back to.

SEEK IT – Verse two: *“Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.”* Verse ten: *“With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!”*

SAVOR IT – Verse 20: *“My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.”* Is that not a fascinating statement? I long for Your rules, O God. Why would you long for rules? Don't we resist rules? The only way you long for rules is if you love them, if you totally trust the one who's giving them and you really believe they're good for you. I think about what I would do if one of my kids said to me, “Dad, I long for your rules.” I would fall over. What an honor it would be to me if my kids would long for the rules I give them because they know how much I love them and they trust that what I'm saying is good for them.

God, teach us to long for Your rules. Why would we not? We know God loves us. God knows far better than us what is good for us. So, God, teach us to savor and long for Your Word.

SHARE IT – Verse 13: *“With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.”* They're so good, I want to tell other people. It's like my kids saying, “Listen to the rules my dad has given me; they're awesome. They're so good we want to share them.”

LISTEN TO & LEARN FROM IT – Verses 12, 26: *“Teach me your statutes!”* Verse 29: *“Graciously teach me your law!”* God, help us to listen to and learn from Your Word.

MEDITATE ON IT – Verse 15: *“I will meditate on Your precepts.”* God, help us to soak in Your Word.

DELIGHT IN IT – Verse 16: *“I will delight in your statutes.”* God, help us to delight in Your Word. Verse 24: *“Your testimonies are my delight.”* This does not sound like somebody for whom Bible reading is a chore. Apparently reading the Bible is not intended to be a duty. It’s intended to be delight.

STORE IT IN YOUR HEART – Verse 11: *“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”* God, help us store Your Word in our hearts. Memorize verses, passages and chapters in God’s Word. I was in the lobby one day and a woman was telling me about her 106-year-old mom, in a nursing home, who has lost so many of her intellectual capacities, but she still remembers verses from God’s Word that she memorized decades ago. Store this Word deep in your heart; it will be a well to draw from for life.

SING IT WITH YOUR MOUTH – Verse 172: *“My tongue will sing of your word.”* Verse 54: *“Your statutes have been my songs.”*

KEEP IT – Verses 5-6: *“Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame.”* God, help us to keep Your Word. Who wants to live in a way that leads to shame? Live in a way that leads to honor. This is the highlight: keeping God’s Word. Verse 56, *“This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts.”* As soon as I read that, I just prayed that this blessing would fall to you, that you would keep God’s precepts. That’s blessing.

OBEY IT – Verse 34: *“Observe it with my whole heart.”*

WALK IN IT – Verse one: *“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!”* And not just walk. Verse 32: *“I will run in the way of your commandments, when you enlarge my heart.”*

GET STRENGTH FROM IT – Verse 28: *“My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.”*

FIND COMFORT IN IT – Verse 50: *“This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.”* I love this.

HOPE IN IT – Verse 147: *“I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.”*

PRAISE IT – Verse 48: *“I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love.”* I love them and I lift up my hands to them.

PROCLAIM IT – Verse 46: *“I will also speak of your testimonies before kings.”*

TRUST IT – Verse 42: *“I shall have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word.”*

TREASURE IT – Verse 72: *“The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.”* This world says the high life is life with a lot of money. This Book says God’s Word is better than thousands, even millions of dollars. It’s that good.

UNDERSTAND IT – Verse 18: “*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*”

REMEMBER IT – Verse 16: “*I will not forget your word.*”

REJOICE AT IT – Verse 162: “*I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.*” Every morning when you wake up, there’s “spoil” just waiting for you to enjoy.

REST IN IT – Verse 114: “*You are my hiding place and my shield.*” Verse 117: “*Hold me up, that I may be safe.*”

Love the Word of God in the Flesh

I love this Word. I pray that God will give you an ever-increasing love for His Word. You may think, “I’m a long way from loving God’s Word.” It takes one step at a time. That’s why I say “ever-increasing” love for His Word. I guarantee you, the more you read it, the more you learn it, the more you meditate on it, the more you store it in your heart, the more you sing it from your mouth and the more you find comfort and strength in it, the more you will experience a high life that blows away anything this world offers you, with all its gold, silver, glitz and glamour.

We can have even greater joy than King David or King Solomon over God’s Word, because we have the entire Bible and we know the Word of God in the flesh—Jesus! Remember, the whole point of this Book is to point us to Jesus. So yes, this is the climax of the Old Testament, but it’s not the climax of the Bible.

Spoiler Alert: After this point in the Old Testament, everything goes downhill. The next few months are going to be really hard. God’s people forget God’s Word, they neglect His wisdom, they rebel against His worship, then everything falls apart. Until we get to the New Testament, the last section of the Bible, where everything climaxes in the coming of Jesus.

Listen to how we’re introduced to Jesus in the Gospel of John: “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*” (John 1:14). The revelation of God became flesh and dwelt among us, “*...and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” God ultimately reveals Himself to us in Jesus His Son, Who comes to us. John 1:18 says, “*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*” Jesus has made God known to us. So don’t just love this Word in written form; love the Word, the revelation of God, in the flesh. Put it together: the high life is found in loving Jesus.

Trust the Wisdom of God

If you want to live the high life, love the Word of God and trust the wisdom of God. I think about the entire book of Proverbs being filled with wisdom from God. Think about Proverbs 3:5-8 for a minute:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

We think we are wise. We think we know what is best for our lives. We don't. God is our Creator Who loves us and He just so happens to be all-wise. I guarantee you that your life will change when you realize that God knows better than you what is best for your life. I just pray that would click in some hearts and minds, maybe for the first time today. Or maybe you'll be reminded that God knows better than you what is best for your life. It is utter foolishness to think otherwise. You can "trust Him with your whole heart."

"Don't lean on your own understanding." Think about how limited our wisdom is and why it's limited. Our wisdom is limited because we lack knowledge. We often act unwisely because we don't have all the facts. We may find out something later and we think, "If I had known that, I wouldn't have done this." We sometimes do foolish things because we lack knowledge, or we might lack perspective. Our perspective is oftentimes distorted or limited. Many times we don't perceive all the effects of a decision. We're unable to see a situation completely from another's point of view, so we make an unwise decision. "Oh, if I had seen it that way, I wouldn't have done that."

We have limited perspective, and third, we lack experience. When we've been through a situation before we then know how to handle it better next time, hopefully. But if we've never been in the situation before, we lack experience on what is wise which affects our decision-making.

So you see these three facets of wisdom coming together—knowledge, perspective and experience—and you realize we are limited in all those areas. This is why we make unwise decisions. But think with me about God's unlimited wisdom. Because God has perfect knowledge, He always has all the facts. God never finds out something later and says, "I would have done something differently if I had known that." He's omniscient. He already knows that. It never happens. God always acts in light of all the facts, because He has perfect knowledge.

God also has eternal perspective on everything. God understands how any circumstance and every decision will affect any and every person. And not just now—He sees the effects now and for all eternity. God calls us to trust Him in the dark when we don't understand, because God sees things we don't see.

Finally, God has infinite experience. He is not a rookie. God is eternal, seeing all things at all times for all of eternity. So are you and I really going to say that we know better than God what is best for our lives? God, help us see our foolishness.

Do you want to experience the high life? Trust the wisdom of God over your own ways, your own plans, your own thoughts. And by all means, trust Him over what a sinful world says is best for your life. Don't believe it.

Then take this a step deeper. Do you want to experience the high life, even when life is hard? Think about when you go through hard days, hard years, and you have all kinds of questions—valid questions. This is why Job, Psalms and Proverbs are all considered “wisdom literature” in the Bible. Amidst all his suffering, Job is considered a wisdom book because even in the hard days, the reality is we lack knowledge, perspective and experience.

In His kindness and love for us, in the middle of dark days, God says, “Trust Me with all your heart.” How can you trust Him? Because you know His knowledge is perfect. You know that God knows all things and God knows what is best in all things. You can trust God because His perspective is eternal. He sees all things and their effect on all peoples for all of eternity. You can trust Him because you know God has infinite experience. He's not new to this thing. He always knows what He's doing. This is the wisdom of God that is a rock to stand on in our trials. I'm not saying this makes trials easy. I think about people who are walking through all kinds of trials right now in life. Isn't it good to know that what you see is not all there is?

When we were struggling through years of infertility, we could not see the plan God had to bless our family through adoption. In our hurt, in our questions—in our crying out “Why?”—we had no idea what God was doing simultaneously in a baby boy's life in Kazakhstan who didn't have a mom or dad. We had no idea what He would do in the years to come in a precious little princess' life in China—or what He's doing even now in the child we're waiting to meet.

That's just one example. I think about families with special needs all across this church who experience hard lives. Is this the high life? It is, when you know that the all-wise God of the universe loves you and loves your child. He promises to be with you and give you everything you need, along with the hope that a hard life in this world is not the end of the story. This is the gospel. The story of Scripture is not a story of ease with everything going perfectly. The story of Scripture is a story of hurting people in a fallen world experiencing all kinds of suffering. Don't miss this. God is not distant from us in our suffering.

Because of the wisdom of God, we have the hope of God. What we see is not all there is. This is most powerfully illustrated in the cross of Christ, what 1 Corinthians 1 calls the pinnacle of God's wisdom. Why is that? Why is the suffering of God's Son—His brutal death on a cross—the pinnacle of God's wisdom? Because in that moment, God had perfect knowledge of every single one of our sins, and in God's eternal perspective, He was making a way for you and me to be saved from our sins.

Jesus died on a cross on the darkest day on earth. The Creator, in the flesh, was murdered by His creation. But that was not the end of the story. With an all-wise God, there's always more to the story. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead in victory over all sin, all suffering and all death. In the wisdom of God, the way was made for you and me to sit here, 2,000 years later in Metro Washington, DC, saved from our sins with the hope of eternal life, with the hope that hard days in this world are not the end of the story. Do you want to experience the high life, even when life is hard? Trust in the wisdom of God Who sees everything from beginning to end and is faithful to bring us to the end.

Live for the Worship of God

Then ultimately, live for the worship of God. This is where things get really awesome. I think they've been awesome up to this point, but it goes to a whole level beyond this. We just read about the height of Old Testament worship, extravagant worship that all revolved around a temple, a building where the glory of God dwelled among His people. Even then, God's people had to stand back at that temple; they could only go so near. Only the priest could go into the inner court, the most holy place, where the ark was. And he could only go at certain times. So as great and glorious as the temple was, the people of God—even in this extravagant worship—were settling for a distant, indirect encounter with the glory of God.

But as the story of Scripture continues, there comes a day when Jesus, God in the flesh, goes to the cross to pay the price for sinners. Then as soon as Jesus dies on the cross, the Bible says in Matthew 27:51, *"Behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."* In that moment, the way was made open for sinners to come into the presence of God.

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, please listen closely to this. In the beginning of the Bible, we read about how sin separated man and woman from God in a way that has rung true in every single one of our lives. All of us have sinned against God. All of us are separated from God, the One Who created us and loves us. The penalty for sin is death and if we die in this state of separation in our sin, we will spend eternity separated from His love. But God has not left us alone in this state. God has come to us in the person of Jesus.

You may be wondering, "Does everything come back to Him?" Yes, it does. Jesus is at the center of it all. Why? Because after living a perfect life with no sin, unlike anyone else, even though He had no sin to die for, He chose to die for you and me, for your sin and my sin. Then three days later He rose from the dead so that anybody who trusts in Him does not need to be eternally separated from God.

I heard a story this week about somebody who came last Sunday for the first time and decided to trust in Jesus to be forgiven of sin. You can make this decision right now, in your heart. Ask God to save you from your sin through what Jesus did on the cross for you. When you put your trust in Jesus, you are

restored, reunited and reconciled to a relationship with God. This means you have access to the presence of God. The curtain of the temple was torn in two and the way was made wide open for you, a sinner, to come into the presence of God.

Notice, we are not coming to a temple today to watch a priest go into God's presence on our behalf. Why? Because Jesus is our Great High Priest and anybody can come to God through Him. In fact, the story gets even more glorious, because after Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and promised that He was going to send His Spirit—not down into a building that people would construct, but directly into the lives of every single person who trusts in Him. In Acts 1:8, Jesus says, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."*

This is confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19, talking to Christians—those who have put their faith in Jesus: *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?"* For all who put their faith in Jesus individually, you're the temple. You are the temple! When you place your faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God comes to dwell in you. That is reason for extravagant worship. You don't have to go to a building to do it. Your body is the place of worship. Your life is a life of worship—so make it extravagant. That means lay down all your life in worship of God.

And we do this not just individually, but as a church. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul says to the church, *"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"* The "you" there is plural. So this is true of us individually and it's true of us as a church. We are the temple. God's Spirit is dwelling among us right now. God's glory is dwelling among us right now. This is not just a hum Sunday morning. This is awesome. God's glory is dwelling among us as His people, so let's make our worship extravagant. Let's sing and shout and lift our hands. Let's kneel and bow down and lift our lives in worship to our God. We are the temple.

But it keeps getting better. We're not His temple just individually or as the church, but we're His temple in the world. Don't miss this major difference between the Old Testament and today. Today, the nations don't come and see the glory of God in a temple. We're not telling people in the world around us or here in Metro Washington, "Go to this place and you'll see the presence of God." This is why you don't see any command in the New Testament to build an extravagant building. You also don't see commands to accumulate extravagant possessions. You actually see the opposite—He commands us to give away possessions.

Why? Because the nations don't see the glory of God by coming and seeing extravagant buildings and wealth in places like the temple. No, no, no. Now the temples—you and me and us as a church—go and spread the glory of God among the nations. The temples are you and me—us. We give our lives to go into this city, into this world, to spread the glory of our God. We throw aside the comforts

of this world to show compassion to those in need. We lay down the possessions and pursuits of this world to take the gospel where it has not yet gone.

When we live like this, there is no limit to where the gospel and glory of God will spread. Get the picture. This week, God has designed temples of the Holy Spirit from all across this gathering to scatter throughout this city and wherever else you might travel. Tons of people are traveling to different places in the United States and around the world this week as demonstrations of the grace and glory of God going out into the world. Just picture people leaving the building as temples and going everywhere, all commissioned to make the grace and glory of God known where they work, where they live, in the lives of people whom God loves and wants to bring to Himself.

We do this individually and together. We're planting churches because we want more temples, more gatherings of God's people who are displaying God's glory all over this city and all over the world. As we talked about last week, we're starting in Washington but not stopping here. We want to see disciples made, churches multiplied and God glorified among every people group on the planet.

So this is the high life. What life is higher than this? I ask you what life is higher than a life that loves the Word of God, that trusts in the wisdom of God and lives for the worship of God in the world? This is the high life. This is the happy life—life in God, living for Jesus in life that lasts forever.

The secret for living the high life today is living for the One in Whom happiness lasts forever.

So now it makes sense, doesn't it? Just realize that the secret to living the high life today is living for the One in Whom happiness lasts forever. The secret of the high life is living for and in the One Who guarantees abundant eternal life. Ladies and gentlemen, I exhort you to live it up like this today. Live it up like this.

Will you bow your heads with me?

God, I pray that You would help us hear Your Word and believe it. Help us receive it today. I feel like I'm speaking to men and women, students and children, in this gathering today who spend all week long hearing all kinds of messages in this world about how to experience life to the full, but there are so many lies. We have had only a few minutes with Your Word, so I pray You would do a supernatural work in these few minutes to open our eyes to the lies of this world and to the truth of Your Word. Help us live in it.

I plead for every person within the sound of my voice. God, please, may they find life in love for Your Word. May they find life in dependence on Your wisdom, trusting in You. If they've never trusted in Jesus, may they put their trust in Him today. Then may they trust in You, Jesus, to lead them this week to

follow and walk in Your ways. God, may You give them grace to trust in You through dark days when life is hard. I pray that You would help us live for Your worship in the world. Use our lives as we scatter today and throughout the week to make Your grace and glory known wherever we go. Help us fulfill our glorious privilege and purpose as temples of Your Holy Spirit, spreading Your grace, love, mercy and glory. Help us live the high life according to Your Word, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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